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SALAR

DIGITAL ENGLISH DAILY, BENGALURU

سالار روزنامہ بنگلور

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1 yr on, AAIB says AI171 crash probe in progress

NEW DELHI, 12 JUNE

The AAIB issued an interim update on the investigation into Air India's AI171 crash, which killed 260 last year. The agency stated that the investigation remains thorough, with a final report to be published after completing all activities, including international review under ICAO Annex 13. The probe has examined aircraft systems, flight data, maintenance, and operational records, supported by experts. The accident during initial climb involved a Boeing 787-8 en route to London, killing 241 onboard and 19 on the ground. The AAIB emphasised the aim to improve aviation safety, urging restraint from speculation. *—PTI*

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China rejects Indian chilli over pesticide concerns

BEIJING, 12 JUNE

China has rejected multiple consignments of Indian dried red chillies, suspending three exporters due to detected methamidophos, a pesticide not approved for agriculture in India. Methamidophos is linked to nervous system disorders. India exported 2.36 lakh tonnes of chillies to China in 2024-25, with China being a major buyer. China's increased scrutiny follows rejection of 70 rice consignments last month over GMO concerns. The rejected chillies are not returned but are under price renegotiation, raising market access fears. China's trade measures reflect heightened food safety checks amid a broader trade tension. *—AGENCIES*

B'day gift? Trump says Iran deal likely this weekend

Deal likely to be signed by Vance in Europe on Don's birthday

WASHINGTON, 12 JUNE

In another dramatic twist, US President Donald Trump on Thursday said that a deal to end the war with Iran is nearly complete and will likely be signed over the weekend in Europe. Reports suggest that it could be signed on Sunday – the Republican's 80th birthday.

Speaking to reporters at the Oval office, Trump said Vice President JD Vance is expected to attend the signing ceremony.

Trump made the remarks after calling off strikes on Iran and its crucial Kharg Island, hours after threatening to hit them "very hard".

"It's a very strong memorandum of understanding. That's a little conceptual, but it's something that's going to get done," Trump said. "It's a very detailed memorandum of understanding."

Later, at a rally, Trump said: "I don't know if you heard, but we ended the war with Iran today (Thursday), and they have agreed never to have a nuclear weapon, something that we insisted on."

US President Donald Trump has repeatedly claimed a deal was imminent *—PTI*

The details of the deal weren't immediately clear. Iranian state-media reported that the deal includes the US agreeing to pay compensations, and that there would be a 60 day window for nuclear negotiations. Trump, however, said on Truth Socials on Friday that those reports were "false".

The Strait of Hormuz, however, is likely to be opened upon signing the deal, both Iran and the US have confirmed.

Trump also claimed that Iran's Supreme Leader had signed off on the deal and has insisted that he had spoken to the leaders of Qatar, the UAE, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Kuwait and Pakistan.

It is also unclear where the deal would be signed. Reuters reported that it may take place in Geneva on Sunday. However, it is also likely to be taken up during the G7 summit in France, starting on 15 June, which Prime Minister Narendra Modi is set to attend alongside Trump.

"They've taken a pounding like very few people could take — and they want to make the deal a lot more than I do," Trump said in response to a question on how Iran came around to agreeing to a deal.

Iran, meanwhile, has stated that the deal had "never been closer" to signing, while also warning against its "red lines". *—Agencies*

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Centre caps diesel sales at 200L/day

NEW DELHI, 12 JUNE

The Centre has capped diesel sales at 200 litres per vehicle per day and barred industrial, commercial and institutional consumers from purchasing petrol or diesel from retail fuel stations to prevent local shortages amid global supply disruptions.

Under a notification issued by the Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas, diesel can now be sold only into vehicle fuel tanks or PESO-approved containers, with purchases limited to 200 litres a day. Bulk consumers, including industries, telecom towers and large commercial users, must source fuel through their own consumer pumps instead of retail outlets.

The restrictions, which can remain in force for up to 90 days, come amid a surge in diesel demand after bulk users shifted to retail pumps due to a sharp price difference. In Delhi, diesel at retail outlets costs Rs 95.20 per litre, compared to Rs 134.50 per litre for bulk buyers.

The government said the measures were necessitated by disruptions in global petroleum supply chains and shipping logistics arising from the West Asia crisis. Authorities warned that bulk purchases from retail outlets could divert fuel meant for ordinary consumers and create local shortages.

State governments have been directed to act against hoarding, black marketing and unauthorised fuel diversion. Violations will attract penalties under the Essential Commodities Act. *—PTI*

DKS seeks Shah's help on law and order & MSP

Chief Minister DK Shivakumar with Union Home Minister Amit Shah, on Friday, in New Delhi *—X@DKSHIVAKUMAR*

NEW DELHI, 12 JUNE

Karnataka Chief Minister DK Shivakumar called on Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Friday in New Delhi and sought his support for strengthening law and order in the State and revisions for the Fair and Remunerative Price (FRP) and Minimum Support Price (MSP) for sugarcane, sugar and ethanol.

These include including sanctioning two battalions of the Indian Reserve Battalion (IRB) and establishing a dedicated cyber crime control unit, Shivakumar said in a statement on X after the meeting.

Shivakumar has sought approval of Rs 280 crore to set up command and control centres in four major cities, and installation of CCTV cameras in police stations at a cost of Rs 278.26 crore under the Assistance to States and Union Territories for Modernisation of Police scheme, 2025-2026.

The CM also sought Shah's intervention in enhancing the FRP for sugarcane, revision of the MSP of sugar, and increased ethanol procurement allocations to support cooperative sugar factories and ensure timely payments to farmers. Last year, sugarcane farmers' protests rocked Karnataka over payment issues. *—Salar News*

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India summons US envoy again over ship attacks

NEW DELHI, 12 JUNE

> **(Iran's) totally rebuffed drone attack last night against Indian Ships leaving the Hormuz Strait is totally unacceptable**
>
> —Donald Trump, US President

India on Friday summoned US charge d'affaires Jason Meeks and told him that the American military's "lethal and deadly" strikes on commercial vessels with Indian crew members off the coast of Oman are "unacceptable".

At least three Indian crew members of a tanker were killed in what the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) said was US action.

"A strong protest was lodged with him regarding the continuing attacks by US naval forces on commercial vessels carrying Indian mariners in the Gulf of Oman, which have already resulted in the tragic and avoidable loss of lives," the MEA said.

Meeks was summoned on Wednesday night as well after a previous strike. A Palau-flagged oil tanker, Marivex, carrying 24 Indian seafarers, was disabled by US forces on 8 June. All crew members were safely rescued. On 10 June, the US struck another Palau-flagged tanker, Settebello, killing three out of the 24 Indian sailors on board. Another vessel, Jalveer, a Guinea-Bissau-flagged tanker with 20 Indians, was attacked on Thursday. *—PTI*

European weapons have killed Indians: EAM

HELSINKI, 12 JUNE

External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar on Thursday defended India's decision to buy Russian oil, by alleging a "moral contradiction" in the European position.

For years Europe sold "weapons used to attack India. Indians have never done anything to endanger Europe," Jaishankar said during a discussion on 'Emerging Powers and the New Geopolitical Competition at the Kultaranta Talks in Finland. "No European country has been attacked with Indian weapons. We have never done anything to endanger Europe."

EAM Jaishankar during the 14th edition of the Kultaranta Talks in Finland, on Thursday *—PTI*

Jaishankar was asked if India was "too sympathetic to Russia".

"I buy oil based on cost and availability… Much of the oil available in the market was Russian because Europeans were essentially buying oil from West Asia," he said.

Jaishankar said to protect global markets, the US asked India to buy Russian energy after Moscow began its invasion of Ukraine. It then introduced and later rescinded tariffs. He criticised the US' "double standards" and its "on-and-off" sanctions on Russian oil. "So let's not pretend that there is some great principle involved here". *—PTI*

SHOOTING LEGEND JASPAL RANA DIES AT 49

NEW DELHI, 12 JUNE

Renowned Indian shooting coach and former pistol champion Jaspal Rana died unexpectedly at 49 following a sudden cardiac rupture, despite initially recovering from a heart attack. Rana, one of India's most celebrated shooters and coaches, won a staggering 24 major international medals, including 15 Commonwealth Games medals (9 gold, 4 silver, 2 bronze) and 8 Asian Games medals (4 gold, 1 silver, 3 bronze).

Rana, celebrated for guiding Manu Bhaker to Olympic medals, had initially fallen ill on the return flight from the Munich World Cup.

Rana was admitted to Max Super Speciality Hospital, Saket, in a critical condition after suffering a heart attack three days earlier while travelling. Dr Balbir Singh, Group Chairman - Cardiac Sciences, explained that Rana presented with an acute, three-day-old heart attack caused by a fully blocked artery, which severely weakened his heart and led to heart failure.

He said that Rana was due for discharge on Friday, when he uffered a sudden cardiac rupture while asleep. *—PTI*

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SC dismisses Natarajan's plea against RS nomination rejection

NEW DELHI, 12 JUNE

The Supreme Court on Friday dismissed Congress leader Meenakshi Natarajan's plea against rejection of her nomination for Rajya Sabha election from Madhya Pradesh.

The bench rejected the argument that Article 32 can be invoked to cure "glaring and manifest" errors in the rejection of her nomination, but granted her liberty to raise the challenge in an election petition.

The Supreme Court reiterated that courts will not intervene during an ongoing election, as Article 329(b) explicitly bars judicial interference to ensure the electoral process proceeds without delay.

"To accept the petitioner's submission would amount to reading into the constitutional scheme an exception which has not been provided by the Constitution itself," the court said.

According to a Madhya Pradesh assembly official, the ruling BJP candidate, Mahesh Kewat, filed a complaint with the returning officer alleging that Natarajan had not mentioned in her affidavit a case registered against her in Telangana.

Following the scrutiny of papers on Thursday, the returning officer declared all three BJP candidates elected unopposed. *—PTI*

> **It is seat chori, everybody knows that. We all know that there is one law for a person from the corporate world and another for those fighting for constitutional principles**
>
> —Meenakshi Natarajan, rejected RS candidate

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STRONGEST EVER?

El Nino conditions to prevail during monsoon: IMD

NEW DELHI, 12 JUNE

The India Meteorological Department (IMD) said on Friday that moderate to strong El Nino conditions are expected to persist and strengthen during India's southwest monsoon season, lasting from June to September. The warning has led to concerns about rainfall distribution in the country, as in the past, the weather phenomenon has been linked to weaker monsoons, affecting India's agricultural produce.

El Nino conditions occur when the atmosphere responds to warming sea surface temperatures. This year's conditions are projected to be the strongest in 140 years, influenced by record-setting ocean temperatures due to global warming. Historically, the condition has also led to warmer atmospheric temperatures, affecting weather patterns all over the world.

Meanwhile, parts of northern India, including Delhi and Himachal Pradesh, witnessed thunderstorms and rainfall, bringing down summer temperatures. Strong winds and showers had Delhi experiencing the coolest day of June so far at around 33 degree Celsius. The IMD has forecast more thunderstorms, rain and gusty winds through Saturday.

Kumarsain and Malana in Himachal Pradesh experienced hailstorms, and maximum daytime temperatures dropped from 44°C to 32.4°C on Friday. *—Salar News*

Heavy rains lashed Bengaluru City on Friday *—PTI*

India, Bangladesh hold border talks amid push-back row

NEW DELHI / DHAKA, 12 JUNE

India and Bangladesh have agreed to strengthen border management through enhanced intelligence-sharing and coordinated patrols during the 57th DG-level border coordination conference between the BSF and BGB held in New Delhi from June 8 to 11.

According to a joint statement, both sides pledged closer cooperation to curb cross-border crimes, including smuggling of narcotics, arms, counterfeit currency, gold and other contraband, as well as illegal migration and human trafficking.

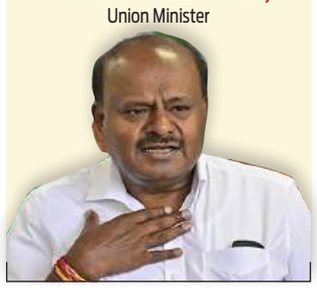
They also discussed measures to raise awareness about respecting the sanctity of the international border.

The development comes amid reports that Bangladesh has deployed armed Ansar volunteers at several locations along the border and protests by Islamist groups against alleged "push-back" operations and border killings. *—Salar News*

QUOTE of THE DAY

Due to the West Asia crisis, every country is facing problems with the fertiliser, but now the supply is different and the rate of fertiliser is also coming down... It will ultimately be solved within 1 week or 10 days.

—HD KUMARASWAMY,
Union Minister



Bengaluru to get traffic enforcement plan: HM

To address the City's unequal traffic growth problem

BENGALURU, 12 JUNE

New Home Minister Priyank Kharge on Friday said an action plan would be formulated with a focus on road safety, stricter enforcement of traffic rules, and improving the efficiency of the traffic police.

He visited the Bengaluru Traffic Management Centre and held discussions with senior officials on the City's traffic management system. The meeting was attended by Director General and Inspector General of Police MA Saleem, Bengaluru City Police Commissioner Seemant Kumar Singh, and others.

Officers told Priyank that while Bengaluru's annual population growth rate stands at 3.7 per cent, the vehicle growth rate is around 10 per cent, a statement from his office said.

Priyank said Bengaluru's traffic was being managed effectively through the use of modern technology and that efforts would be made to further improve operational efficiency in the coming days.

Home Minister Priyank Kharge reviews Intelligent Traffic Management System for Bengaluru's mobility —*X@PRIYANKKHARGE*

"Bengaluru requires an agile Urban Mobility Plan to address congestion, last-mile gaps, public transport integration, delivery logistics, corporate commute pressure and data-driven mobility planning," Priyank stated on X after the meeting.

"We will set up a committee that will bring together Traffic Police, Greater Bengaluru Authority, BMTC, BMRCL, BDA, DULT, Suburban Railway/K-RIDE, mobility platforms such as Namma Yatri, MoveInSync, Uber and Rapido, delivery platforms such as Swiggy, and technology clusters such as ORR and Manyata," Priyank added. "The proposed committee will act as a mission-mode coordination...with clear deliverables, working groups and dashboard-based accountability." he stated.

The Bengaluru Traffic Police, functioning across four divisions and operating 53 police stations, manages traffic on a road network spanning approximately 14,000 kilometres. Officials said the City has around 1.25 crore registered vehicles.

—Salar News with agencies

Machines must for septic tank cleaning

BENGALURU, 12 JUNE

Rural Development and Panchayat Raj Minister **Eshwar B Khandre** warned that disciplinary action will be taken if workers are forced to manually clean septic tanks or sewage pits, and mandated the use of machines.

Referring to a statement by Safai Karmachari Development Corporation Chairman that Karnataka has 7,483 manual scavengers, Khadre said that all cleaning must be mechanised and announced that the government will procure jetting and suction machines.

Speaking ahead of a district review meeting in Devanahalli, Khandre said a Faecal Sludge Treatment Plant (FSTP) has been set up there and announced plans to establish similar facilities at the panchayat level.

Khandre also ordered the geotagging of all Bengaluru Rural Zilla Panchayat properties to prevent encroachment. He also directed officials to fix e-Swathu server issues and stated that the government is considering exemptions from documentation requirements for rural residents with ancestral properties.

During the progress review meeting, Khandre instructed officials to inspect roads excavated for water pipeline work.

Khandre said the revamped MGNREGA, now renamed Viksit Bharat Gram Rozgar Yojana (VB-G RAM G), is set to launch on 1 July and said he hard urged Union Rural Development Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan to change the Centre-State financing to 80:20 instead of the current 60:40 fund-sharing basis. Khandre had also sought the withdrawal of the proposed 60-day employment gap. He further instructed officials to test borewell water for harmful substances.

—Salar News

Prison official found hanging in Dharwad quarters

DHARWAD, 12 JUNE

A prison official was found hanging from a ceiling fan inside his quarters, police said. The deceased, identified as Shiddaramappa Basappa Vaddar, 33, from Sudi in Gadag, was serving as a Jailer at Dharwad Central Jail, recently transferred to Mysuru. No suicide note was recovered. Hubballi-Dharwad Police Commissioner N Shashikumar said the body was found after family attempted to contact him but received no response. Vaddar had been suspended for two months for disciplinary reasons, over allegations of facilitating prohibited items into the jail. A case is expected to be filed after a family complaint. —*PTI*

BJP leader seeks action against Congress MLA

BENGALURU, 12 JUNE

Senior BJP leader Chalavadi Narayanaswamy demanded legal action against Congress MLA Pradeep Eshwar for alleged derogatory remarks about Modi supporters. Narayanaswamy shared letters with CM DK Shivakumar, HM Priyank Kharge, and DGP MA Saleem. He cited a report stating Eshwar called Indian citizens supporting Modi "traitors." Narayanaswamy condemned the comments as "highly objectionable, , unlawful," and damaging to national dignity. He warned that such remarks risked inciting hatred. The BJP leader urged immediate registration of a case, investigation, and legal action without bias, emphasising that the remarks undermine democratic values.—*PTI*

Chief Minister DK Shivakumar meets President Droupadi Murmu and Vice President CP Radhakrishnan in New Delhi on Friday —*PTI*

CM meets Jal Shakti Minister for Mekedatu, Mahadayi projects

NEW DELHI, 12 JUNE

Chief Minister DK Shivakumar and Irrigation Minister Ramalinga Reddy on Friday met Union Jal Shakti Minister CR Patil to push for the implementation of the Supreme Court's Mekedatu order on the Kaveri River, a resolution on the Krishna water award, and to address pending releases under the Mahadayi water project.

A day earlier, Shivakumar had written to Prime Minister Narendra Modi and urged him to expedite the clearance for the project that has pitted Karnataka against Tamil Nadu.

After meeting Patil, Shivakumar told reporters, "We have raised the issue of the Mahadayi water issue. We were supposed to get Rs 5,300 crores, which has been kept in the Cabinet company, still not been released."

On X, Shivakumar added, "I urged the Union Government to expedite clearances and support for key initiatives, including Mekedatu, notification of the KWDT II Award, release of committed assistanes for the Upper Bhadra Project, and approvals for the Kalasa Banduri projects, along with other proposals pending before the Union Government".

He said that these were critical for irrigation, drinking water security, drought mitigation, and the welfare of millions of farmers across the State and was hopeful he would get a positive response.

In Delhi, Shivakumar also met President Droupadi Murmu at Rashtrapati Bhavan and Vice President CP Radhakrishnan. *—ANI*

Kharge thanks Cong, people of K'taka for RS seat

BENGALURU, 12 JUNE

All India Congress Committee (AICC) chief Mallikarjun Kharge on Friday thanked the Congress party, and the people of Karnataka on his election to the Rajya Sabha from the state, pointing out that this was the 13th election in his political life. He particularly thanked Sonia Gandhi, saying she has consistently provided him with opportunities to serve the people.

This will be the second Rajya Sabha term for the 83-year-old veteran leader.

Kharge also targeted the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and Prime Minister Narendra Modi for the Congress candidate's nomination getting rejected in Madhya Pradesh, calling the action "illegal, immoral and anti-democratic."

He alleged that Modi purposely is doing this as part of a conspiracy to "finish" the Congress party.

The other newly elected members are AICC secretary Mansoor Ali Khan, Congress's media and publicity department chairperson Pawan Khera and BJP's M Nagaraja. The four were elected uncontested to the four available seats after a fifth independent candidate's nomination was rejected. *—Agencies*

AICC Secretary Mansoor Ali Khan, who was elected unopposed to the Rajya Sabha, meets Siddaramaiah. Khan visited the former CM with his mother Ayesha Rahman, wife Tasbia Mansoor Khan and sons —*x*

CHILDREN FOR CHILD RIGHTS

Students take part in a rally to mark International Anti Child Labour Day at Sri Kanteerava Stadium in Bengaluru on Friday—*MOHAMMED ASAD*

GT Devegowda prepares to field wife in Assembly polls

MYSURU, 12 JUNE

Former minister and Chamundeshwari MLA GT Devegowda, estranged from JD(S) and at odds with Union Minister HD Kumaraswamy, is fielding his wife Lalitha GT as an early move ahead of the 2028 assembly elections.

Devegowda will not relinquish his Chamundeshwari seat and will contest from JD(S).

He hosted a felicitation called "Lalithabhinandana" to honour Lalitha, recently awarded the Sahakara Ratna by the State.

Speculation suggests he may seek a ticket for her from Hunsur, represented by his son GD Harish Gowda who joined Kumaraswamy's faction. The event was held without his son

The event saw eminent personalities including former vice chancellor KS Rangappa who urged more women to enter politics, citing Lalitha's role in empowering rural women.

Devegowda praised his wife's sacrifices and achievements, notably for supporting his political journey. *—Salar News*

VIJAY IN MOOKAMBIKA

Tamil Nadu Chief Minister C Joseph Vijay visited the Mookambika Temple at Kollur and offered prayers on Friday. Amid massive fanfare and hefty police deployment, Vijay spent at least 20 minutes at the temple. Tamil Nadu's two iconic chief ministers — late MG Ramachandran and J Jayalalithaa — were regular visitors to the temple. —*PTI*

HM weighs in on Chinnaiah's HC plea

BENGALURU, 12 JUNE

Home Minister Priyank Kharge on Friday said the Special Investigation Team (SIT) probing "multiple murders, rapes and burials" in Dharmasthala would respond to the High Court after CN Chinnaiah's writ petition, claiming conspiracy in funds to defame the sacred site.

He said the veracity of claims made by the accused in the petition needed verification.

"It is a court-monitored probe..it cannot be discussed publicly," Priyank told reporters in the City.

Priyank raised doubts on Chinnaiah reportedly claiming he had been paid Rs 200 crore to fund the conspiracy.

"He is the same person who had claimed about multiple murders, rapes and burials. It needs to be verified whether he is telling the truth," Priyank said.

The writ petition was filed before the Karnataka High Court on Thursday, in which Chinnaiah claimed he was used as part of a conspiracy to malign Dharmasthala.

He sought directions to the SIT to probe and take action against the involved.

He allegedly named activist Mahesh Shetty Timarodi, Girish Mattannavar, Vitthal Gowda, and Jayant of "orchestrating a campaign" against Dharmasthala.

Chinnaiah also reportedly mentioned actor Prakash Raj in the petition. Priyank said that just because Raj is named, he cannot be considered a criminal.

Chinnaiah was arrested on charges of perjury after claiming to have buried hundreds of bodies, many bearing the signs of sexual abuse, over two decades, with allegations pointing to the temple administrators. The State government's SIT, arrested him after finding a few bodies near the Nethravathi River. *—PTI*

Please do not believe rumours or exaggerated and fabricated stories that some malicious individuals are trying to attach to this news

-Prakash Raj, Actor & activist on reportedly being named as conspirator

'Why Rs 900cr for stdm, move SWIFT city to N K'taka'

BENGALURU, 12 JUNE

Expelled BJP MLA Basangouda Patil Yatnal demanded a halt to the 1,000 acres SWIFT City project near Sarjapur, and the proposed construction of the Anekal international cricket stadium. Instead of concentrating such massive projects around the capital, he argued on X on Friday, such projects should be taken up in North Karnataka to foster regional development.

He alleged that Karnataka Industrial Areas Development Board (KIADB) had illegally acquired fertile land by changing the classification to "dry land".

The government is yet to submit its Environmental Impact Assessment for the project, he noted.

"In Karnataka's agricultural economy, farmers who lose their land will lose their traditional livelihood and suffer."

Yatnal added that there was no need to build another stadium in Bengaluru anyway.

"If 5-6 matches are played in a year in the existing Chinnaswamy Stadium" that is more than enough, he added.

Yatnal called for an immediate halt to the Bidadi Integrated Township Programme, and the projects being implemented in Sarjapur-Anekal. *—Salar News*

IN KALABURAGI

5 injured as govt college roof collapses

KALABURAGI, 12 JUNE

Five students were injured when a portion of the ceiling suddenly collapsed during a class at the Government Pre-University Girls' College in Kalaburagi city on Friday morning.

More than 80 students were attending a commerce lesson when chunks of cement plaster from the ceiling began breaking off and fell onto them.

The injured students – identified as Sheetal (daughter of Basavaraj), Sneha (daughter of Kashinath), Divya Subhash, Pooja Gundappa and Srushti Shivanand – were immediately shifted to a city hospital for treatment. No fatalities were reported.

The incident was captured on the college's CCTV cameras, showing frightened students rushing out of the classroom in panic.

The ceiling collapsed during an 80-student commerce class at Government Pre-University Girls' College in Kalaburagi city on Friday —*SALAR*

Although the building was constructed in 2016, there are allegations that substandard work and inadequate maintenance have led to its deteriorated condition. College Principal Devangouda stated that water stagnation on the roof during rains appears to have weakened the ceiling.

The matter has already been brought to the attention of the concerned authorities, and requests for urgent repairs have been submitted.

Parents and members of the public expressed anger against the college administration after learning about the incident. Officials have been directed to conduct a comprehensive investigation.

Parents and students have demanded an immediate structural audit of government school and college buildings across the entire district in order to prevent future tragedies. *—Salar News*

State approves 50 AI labs in govt colleges

BENGALURU, 12 JUNE

- The 2026-27 State budget initiative, will be in partnership with the Centre's AI Mission.

The Karnataka government has approved the establishment of 50 Artificial Intelligence (AI) laboratories in government colleges across the State to improve access to emerging technologies and enhance employability among students in Tier-2 and Tier-3 cities.

The initiative, announced in the 2026-27 State budget, will be implemented in partnership with the Centre's AI Mission. Each laboratory will receive financial assistance of Rs 68.98 lakh over three years under the national programme, while the State government has sanctioned Rs 10 crore for the project, including Rs 6.29 crore in the first year.

The AI labs will offer practical training in artificial intelligence, machine learning, data science and related technologies, helping students develop industry-relevant skills and prepare for opportunities in the digital economy.

Minister for IT and BT Priyank Kharge said the initiative would ensure that technology-driven opportunities are accessible beyond major urban centres and help students build future-ready capabilities.

The government has approved 23 institutions in the first phase. Officials said the programme would strengthen Karnataka's innovation ecosystem by providing advanced technology infrastructure and hands-on learning opportunities across the State. *—PTI*

—ANI

WB Minister holds pooja at arrested ex-min's office

KOLKATA, 12 JUNE

Newly appointed West Bengal Minister Bishal Lama performed a puja before entering his office in the state secretariat, previously used by Partha Chatterjee, who was arrested in the school jobs scam. Lama, Minister of State for Home and Hill Affairs, told reporters that conducting puja was a personal practice and should not be viewed differently because of the room's past occupant. He visited the office on Friday, and officials informed him it was earlier used by Chatterjee during the previous government. Lama said he would "first sprinkle Ganga water and offer prayers" before sitting. Partha Chatterjee was arrested in July 2022 over the cash-for-school jobs scam and was granted bail by the High Court in November 2025. —*PTI*

FIR filed against Mamata over WB poll remarks

KOLKATA, 12 JUNE

An FIR has been registered against former West Bengal chief minister and TMC leader Mamata Banerjee for allegedly making provocative remarks during the last assembly poll campaign, a senior officer said. A complaint was lodged at Netaji Nagar Police Station, alleging Banerjee's comments at a party programme on 9 March at Metro Channel in Kolkata's Esplanade area were "capable of promoting enmity between communities". The case, initially a zero FIR, was transferred to Hare Street Police Station, as that jurisdiction covers the location of the comments. The officer added, "The complainant alleged that Mamta Banerjee's statements had the potential to disturb peace and adversely affect communal harmony."—*PTI*

FIR filed against 3 for defaming SP chief's daughter

KANPUR, 12 JUNE

Three individuals have been booked for allegedly circulating objectionable social media posts targeting Aditi Yadav, daughter of Samajwadi Party chief Akhilesh Yadav. The First Information Report (FIR) was lodged after Parveen Yadav, Samajwadi Party's national secretary, accused the suspects of sharing misleading content intended to tarnish her image and malign the family's reputation. The accused are Bharat Kumar Patel, Nageshwar Singh Baghel, and Vinod Kumar Yadav. The post, uploaded on June 9, linked her to theft and criminal activities and featured a morphed photograph. The First Information Report, registered under relevant sections of the law, is under investigation. A forensic examination of the photograph requested by the police is also underway to trace the origin of the posts. —*PTI*

Naidu offers to help kin of sailor killed in US attack

AMARAVATI, 12 JUNE

Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu expressed grief over the death of Patnaala Suresh, who was killed in a missile strike on a vessel off Oman. Suresh was among three Indian crew members killed in the attack. The vessel remains stranded offshore, and Omani authorities are working to bring it to port. Naidu assured his family of support, stating the government would "stand by the family and provide all necessary assistance." The Andhra Pradesh Bhavan is monitoring the situation, coordinating with Indian and Omani authorities. Suresh's wife, Bhargavi, said officials were actively following up as the process of repatriation involved many formalities. —*PTI*

Docu signed by 19 rebel TMC MPs goes viral

Group seeks recognition as separate LS bloc, backs NDA

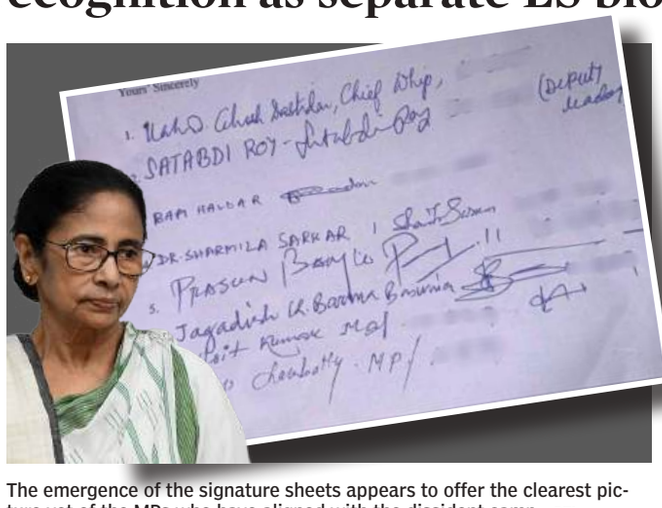
KOLKATA, 12 JUNE

The scale of the TMC parliament party's revolt came into focus on Friday after the purported signatures of 19 TMC MPs surfaced on a letter to the Lok Sabha Speaker seeking their recognition as a separate bloc under Kakoli Ghosh Dastidar and extending support to the BJP-led NDA.

The emergence of the signature sheets, however, appears to offer the clearest picture yet of the MPs who have aligned with the dissident camp that has challenged the authority of TMC chief Mamata Banerjee

As per copies of the documents circulating on social media, the signatories are Barasat MP Kakoli Ghosh Dastidar, Birbhum MP Satabdi Roy, Mathurapur's Bapi Haldar, Bardhaman Purba MP Sharmila Sarkar, Cooch Behar's MP Jagadish Chandra Barma Basunia, and Bolpur MP Asit Mal.

Sources close to the dissident camp claimed the MPs had informed the Lok Sabha Speaker about the formation of a separate bloc under Ghosh Dastidar.



The emergence of the signature sheets appears to offer the clearest picture yet of the MPs who have aligned with the dissident camp —*PTI*

With 28 MPs in the Lok Sabha, the TMC is the third-largest opposition party after the Congress and the Samajwadi Party.

Rebel MP Jagadish Chandra Barma Basunia told PTI Videos that the group would meet Speaker Om Birla on Monday and press its claim.

TMC MLA Kunal Ghosh demanded that the signatures should be matched with the specimen signatures available with the Lok Sabha Secretariat.

Meanwhile, the West Bengal CID issued a fresh summons to TMC leader Abhishek Banerjee on Friday for a second round of questioning on 14 June in connection with the alleged signature forgery case, an officer said.

Banerjee, who appeared before the investigators on Thursday was questioned for several hours.

Investigators sought clarification on how signatures of legislators who were absent from the party meeting appeared on the resolution and where the original copy was kept. — *PTI*

- The TMC MPs who signed the document are Barasat MP Dastidar, Birbhum MP Satabdi Roy, Mathurapur's Bapi Haldar, Bardhaman Purba MP Sharmila Sarkar, Cooch Behar's MP Jagadish Chandra Barma Basunia, and Bolpur MP Asit Mal

RS NOMINATION REJECTION

Congress leader Meenakshi Natarajan, centre, speaks as party leader Jitu Patwari, right, looks on during a party briefing at the AICC headquarters in New Delhi —*PTI*

BJP, EC 'partners in crime,' says Congress

NEW DELHI, 12 JUNE

The BJP and the Election Commission are "partners in crime" in the latest instance of "seat chori" by rejecting the Rajya Sabha election nomination of Congress candidate Meenakshi Natarajan, the party alleged on Friday, claiming that the rejection was based on "flawed, unreasonable" logic.

Addressing a press conference here, Meenakshi said she had filled Form 26, and there was no column to mention private complaints. "If there was a column for it, I would have given the details," she said.

The most important point is that information must be provided if there is any pending criminal case, or if someone has been convicted of a punishable offence, Natarajan said.

"Naturally, I wrote 'Not Applicable' for all these things because there is only a legal notice against me, and I included the details of that notice in the memorandum I submitted to the EC. There is only a legal notice which the court has not even taken cognisance of," she said.

In Madhya Pradesh, the BJP did not have the required number of MLAs to win a third Rajya Sabha seat and was 10 MLAs short. Despite that, the BJP fielded a candidate, the party said. — *PTI*

CONGRESS A 'SINKING SHIP': FADNAVIS

Maharashtra Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis said on Friday that the Congress is a "sinking ship" and that he doesn't think any Opposition party would want to board it.

Fadnavis was responding to questions on speculation about the merger of Mamata Banerjee-led TMC and Sharad Pawar's NCP (SP) with the Congress.

Opposition consolidation will mean the BJP will get more political space, he told reporters here.

On Wednesday, Shiv Sena (UBT) MP Sanjay Raut had suggested that parties like the TMC and NCP (SP), formed after their leaders quit the Congress, should return to the fold of the Congress to create an alternative to the BJP. —*PTI*

TN Speaker issues notices to former AIADMK MLAs

CHENNAI, 12 JUNE

Tamil Nadu Assembly Speaker J C D Prabhakar on Friday said he had initiated legal proceedings against 4 former All India Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (AIADMK) legislators who quit the party and joined the Tamilaga Vettri Kazhagam (TVK).

The four former legislators – Maragatham Kumaravel, S Jayakumar, P Sathyabama and Esakki Subaya – joined the ruling TVK hours after resigning as AIADMK MLAs. They were among the 25 rebel legislators who voted in favour of the TVK government during the floor test in the Assembly on 13 May.

The notices, seeking an explanation about a petition by the AIADMK to disqualify them under the Anti-Defection Law, was issued on 9 June, he said.

The members have been given seven days to provide an explanation, Prabhakar told reporters here.

His decisions were within the Assembly based on official correspondence and were independent of external political activities, the Speaker added.

Meanwhile, the disqualification proceedings on the other 21 rebel AIADMK legislators have been dropped after the party withdrew the request. The group, led by former state minister S P Velumani, recently called on AIADMK general secretary Edappadi K Palaniswami. They agreed to function as a united AIADMK, accepting the leadership of Palaniswami. —*PTI*

ED issues new summons to ex-Kerala CM's daughter

KOCHI, 12 JUNE

- The Enforcement Directorate has asked Veena to appear at its Kochi office at 10 am on 17 June, along with documents about transactions involving her info tech firm, Exalogic Solutions Private Limited

The ED, which is probing a money laundering case involving minerals company CMRL, has issued a fresh summons to Veena T, the daughter of former Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan, directing her to appear for questioning on 17 June, sources said on Friday.

The ED had earlier asked Veena to appear before its Kochi unit on Friday. However, following an email from Veena seeking more time, citing health issues, the agency issued a fresh summons, sources said.

The ED has asked Veena to appear at its Kochi office at 10 am on 17 June, along with documents about transactions involving her IT firm, Exalogic Solutions Private Limited.

The probe pertains to allegations that Cochin Minerals and Rutile Ltd (CMRL) made payments of Rs 2.78 crore to Exalogic without receiving any services in return.

ED said that another company, Empower India Capital Investments Private Limited (EICPL), operated by CMRL Managing Director Sasidharan Kartha, had extended loans of Rs 50 lakh to Exalogic despite the company failing to make repayments.

The agency has alleged that Veena and the management of CMRL, led by Sasidharan Kartha, generated "proceeds of crime" through these transactions. — *PTI*

Next election ours, but polls won't be fair: Rahul

NEW DELHI, 12 JUNE

Congress leader Rahul Gandhi told INDIA leaders earlier this week that going by the anger among the people, the next general election is "already won" but the main problem is that there won't be a free and fair election.

At the INDIA meeting on Monday, he also gave a clarion call to the leaders to stay united.

He also responded to criticism of the Congress by its allies, including the Left, by referring to the "blue-necked one (Shiva) who drinks all the poison," and said whatever criticism they have of him or his party will be accepted with a smile. Gandhi on Friday put out on his social media accounts his speech at the meeting where INDIA stressed unity against the BJP.

On Monday, INDIA unanimously decided to demand Education Minister Pradhan's immediate resignation over the NEET-CBSE row and write to the CJI on the SIR exercise and "vote loot."

Gandhi said there is confusion in the opposition with the likes of the SP, the TMC, the RJD believing that the political instruments they have used so far will still work.

These only worked when the Indian state provided a fair field for them to operate in, he said, adding that field does not exist anymore. He alleged that the BJP controls the institutions of the state -- the legal system, the bureaucracy, the intelligence agencies and even the Election Commission.

"Mamata ji is not 100 per cent sure, but she is about 90 per cent sure that her election was stolen from her. Uddhav ji is 40 per cent sure that his election was stolen. My brother Tejashwi ji is 40 per cent sure. Listen 100 per cent the elections are being stolen. Please remove doubt from your minds," Gandhi said. — *PTI*

Students join Lucknow CJP protest over exam irregularities

LUCKNOW, 12 JUNE

Students and government job aspirants assembled here on Friday for a protest led by Cockroach Janta Party (CJP) founder Abhijeet Dipke over alleged examination irregularities, with demonstrators pressing for the resignation of Union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan.

Candidates preparing for teaching, medical, revenue, administrative, and other recruitment examinations were among the protesters who gathered at the Eco Garden here.

The demonstration is part of a campaign launched by the CJP, which had earlier held demonstrations in Delhi and Pune.

"The application was submitted by a teacher, Vivek Kumar, late Thursday. After completing procedures, permission was granted," Additional Commissioner of Police (Law and Order) Babloo Kumar told PTI.

He added that reports claiming police had denied permission to organise the were misleading. Earlier, Dipke had said the protest would be conducted in a peaceful and constitutional manner to raise concerns over alleged examination irregularities.

Supporters of Cockroach Janata Party (CJP) take part in a protest demanding resignation of Union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan over examination-related lapses at the Eco Garden in Lucknow—*PTI*

"We have held peaceful protests in Delhi and Pune. We are not doing anything wrong. We only want to put forward our views in a democracy," he had said.

The Cockroach Janta Party plans to hold protest demonstrations in Amritsar and Bengaluru cities before returning to New Delhi's Jantar Mantar area for a planned larger peaceful protest on 2 June. —PTI

PROBE ORDERED

Smriti Irani's name not in Amethi panchayat voters' list

AMETHI 12 JUNE

Former Union minister Smriti Irani has been left out of the panchayat voter list of Medan Mawai village in Amethi district despite her name being present in the Lok Sabha and Assembly electoral rolls for the area, officials said on Friday.

Amethi District Magistrate Sanjay Chauhan said an inquiry had been ordered into the matter.

The BJP leader had represented Amethi in the Lok Sabha from 2019 to 2024. She built a residence in Medan Mawai village under the Gauriganj Assembly constituency after winning the 2019 parliamentary election. She is registered as a voter from the village and had voted there during the Lok Sabha polls.

Smriti was Amethi MP earlier —*PTI*

Asked about the omission, Chauhan said the exact reason would be known only after the inquiry report is submitted.

BJP Amethi district president Sudhanshu Shukla said an application seeking inclusion of Irani's name in the panchayat voter list had been submitted and the matter brought to the notice of senior officials. He said officials have assured that the name would be added after verification.

Irani lost the 2024 Lok Sabha elections from Amethi to Congress leader Kishori Lal Sharma. —PTI

Raut attacks BJP over theft at Ram Temple

MUMBAI, 12 JUNE

Shiv Sena (UBT) MP Sanjay Raut on Friday launched a scathing attack on the BJP-led central government and the Uttar Pradesh government over the alleged misappropriation of Rs 7 crore from offerings made at the Ayodhya Ram Temple.

Raut announced that the Shiv Sena (UBT) planned to visit Ayodhya to bow their heads and seek forgiveness from Lord Ram.

"The way a dacoity involving over Rs 5 crore was committed against the Ram Mandir's offerings; it is visible in the CCTV footage... If Rs 5crore from the offerings made to Ram are stolen, your governments, both in UP and at the Centre is responsible," he said. — *PTI*

BJP, SAD blast Mann govt over sacrilege bid

CHANDIGARH, 12 JUNE

The BJP and the Shiromani Akali Dal on Friday condemned the sacrilege attempt at Shaheed Baba Gurbaksh Singh Ji within the Golden Temple complex, where a man allegedly picked up a 'Sri Sahib', or sacred sword, placed in front of the Guru Granth Sahib. The incident occurred on Wednesday night, when a man entered the sanctum during an Akhand Path and, after a 'parkarma' (circumambulating) of the Guru Granth Sahib, and suddenly picked up the Sri Sahib placed before it.

However, sewadars present at the gurdwara overpowered the man and handed him over to the police. The man is in police custody.

BJP spokesperson RP Singh called the incident a direct attack on the Sikh community's religious sentiments.

Singh urged the Punjab government to order a comprehensive probe. Echoing similar sentiments, Shiromani Akali Dal president Sukhbir Singh Badal asked the government to arrest the "real conspirator immediately."

"Why do such incidents o take place despite warnings? What measures were implemented after the 2021 sacrilege attempt? Were the recommendations arising from that incident enforced? Why has public confidence not been restored despite assurances?" RP Singh said. — *PTI*

Bombay HC frees 2 over drug overdose at concert

MUMBAI, 12 JUNE

The Bombay High Court has granted bail to two NESCO Ltd employees accused in connection with a drug overdose at a concert in Goregaon in April. Justice Shyam Chandak ordered them to submit a Rs one lakh surety each, appear monthly at the police station, and not tamper with evidence. Sunny Jain, 31, a senior manager, and Balkrishna Kurup, 46, vice president of NESCO Exhibitions, were arrested after the deaths of management students Shreya Rai and Bismat Bhasin. They had allegedly overdosed on MDMA at the event. The police sought a four-week stay on the bail order for an appeal in the Supreme Court, but it was refused. The duo claimed they held no responsibility for security or drug procurement. —*PTI*

—PTI

Stone pelted at train with Mohan Bhagwat on board

FIROZABAD, 12 JUNE

An unidentified person pelted a stone at a coach of the Lucknow-Delhi Shatabdi Express near the Firozabad railway station, with RSS chief Mohan Bhagwat on board, police said. The incident occurred at 7.45pm on Thursday, near the Pemeshwar Gate bridge on the Etawah-Tundla section when a stone was thrown at one of the coaches of the 12003 up Shatabdi Express, they said. According to sources, Bhagwat, who boarded the E1 coach in Kanpur, is safe. After being alerted by Railway officials, senior police officers rushed to the spot. The exact circumstances surrounding the incident, including the man who threw the stone, will be clear after scanning CCTV camera footage from the area, police said. —*PTI*

—PTI

Hoax bomb threat delays flight from Lucknow to Delhi

LUCKNOW, 12 JUNE

A Lucknow-Delhi IndiGo flight was delayed after a hoax bomb threat was received shortly before departure. The aircraft, with around 180 passengers, was scheduled to take off at 10.45am. Crew members received information about a possible bomb onboard, prompting security checks. During inspection, a tissue paper with the word "bomb" was found in the lavatory, creating panic. Officials confirmed no explosive or harmful substance was discovered. An IndiGo spokesperson said the threat was immediately reported, and the aircraft would only depart after clearance. The airline apologised for the inconvenience, emphasising that passenger safety remains their top priority. —*PTI*

Man dies as traffic delays ambulance at Attappady ghat

PALAKKAD, 12 JUNE

Sajeev Kumar, a 25-year-old tribal resident of Valamari Ooru, died after an ambulance was delayed in traffic at Attappady ghat. He was being transferred from the Tribal Taluk Speciality Hospital to Thrissur Medical College with high fever and breathing difficulties. The ambulance was stuck for over an hour after a fallen tree blocked the road. By the time he arrived at the hospital, his condition had worsened, and he died. The police have launched an investigation, and a case is expected to be registered soon. Officials will proceed after discussions with Kumar's family and medical staff, authorities said. —*PTI*

HC junks plea to reopen CBSE re-evaluation portal

PIL sought manual rechecking of answers of affected pupil

NEW DELHI, 12 JUNE

NSUI sought an independent inquiry into the alleged irregularities in the on-screen marking system for class 12 exam —*PTI*

The Delhi High Court on Friday refused to direct the reopening of CBSE's portal for the re-evaluation of class 12 answer sheets on a PIL by the Congress' student wing.

A vacation bench of Justices Neena Bansal Krishna and Madhu Jain observed that a student was free to take action if aggrieved and that reopening the portal - which was operational from 2 to 7 June - would delay the entire process of result declaration.

As the counsel appearing for the National Students' Union of India (NSUI) urged the court to order reopening of the portal for a few more days, Solicitor General (SG) Tushar Mehta, appearing for the authorities, submitted that the aggrieved students have already submitted their requests and the disputed answer sheets are being considered.

Mehta said the PIL was based on "very general assumptions" and if the NSUI's prayers were allowed, the undergraduate admission of more than 17 lakh students would be adversely affected.

He informed the court that the deadline was earlier extended by a day, and the portal was closed on 7 June instead of 6 June.

"The system has operated for those who wanted to apply... More than 1.67 lakh students have requested, and 3.8 lakh answer sheets are being examined," the SG said.

Mehta added that the Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) opened a portal from 19 to 25 May for students to obtain their scanned answer sheets, and around 4 lakh requested more than 11 lakh answer sheets.

- Tushar Mehta, appearing for the authorities, said the PIL was based on "very general assumptions" and if the NSUI's prayers were allowed, the undergraduate admission of more than 17 lakh students would be adversely affected

On a request by the NSUI counsel, the court listed the matter for hearing before the roster bench in July.

On June 8, the court sought the stand of the Centre and the CBSE on NSUI's petition, which has also sought an independent inquiry into the alleged irregularities in the on-screen marking (OSM) system for class 12 exam. —*PTI*

NTA MAKES CHANGES

NEET-UG 2026 students to get 15 extra minutes

NEW DELHI, 12 JUNE

The National Testing Agency (NTA) on Friday announced a series of student-friendly measures for NEET (UG) 2026, including additional rough-work space, and an extended examination window.

The medical entrance examination is scheduled for 21 June.

The examination will be conducted from 2pm to 5.15pm, providing a total window of 195 minutes. The duration of the examination has been extended by 15 minutes.

"This window is designed to accommodate the invigilation formalities at the start and end of the examination, such as the signing requirements, which candidates earlier felt reduced their effective working time," the agency said.

The NTA has also doubled the number of pages provided for rough work in the question-paper booklet from two to four pages, giving candidates additional space for calculations and reasoning.

The agency also has redesigned the placement of rough-work pages to better support left-handed candidates.

"The booklet now offers rough-work space at both the front and the back, allowing every candidate to work comfortably, and is especially helpful for left-handed candidates, who account for nearly 10% of all candidates," it said.

NEET-UG for admissions into medical courses took place on 3 May but was cancelled on 12 May amid allegations of a paper leak. The CBI is investigating. —*PTI*

7 more Shigella cases confirmed in Wayanad

WAYANAD, 12 JUNE

Seven more cases of Shigella have been confirmed in a school in Kerala's Wayanad district, taking the total number of infected children to 16, health officials said on Friday.

District Medical Officer (DMO) Dr KT Rekha said that infectious disease surveillance and preventive and control awareness drives have been strengthened in the district.

The DMO also said that the condition of all the 16 children who have been confirmed to be infected was satisfactory.

She advised that children with symptoms should minimise contact with others, and precautions should be taken to prevent the spread of the disease.

If any new symptoms appear, health workers should be informed immediately, and treatment should be sought at the nearest health centres, the DMO said and advised not to self-medicate.

Rekha also informed that the public should strictly follow the instructions issued by the Health Department.

She cautioned the public to observe personal hygiene and ensure cleanliness of surroundings and food.

On Thursday, Kerala Health Minister K Muraleedharan said that new Shigella cases were reported from Thiruvananthapuram, Kollam and Kozhikode districts too.

He also said that till 11 June, 578 people were symptomatic and 55 have been admitted to government and private hospitals.

In Wayanad, where a majority of those infected are students of an aided school, he said strong bacterial presence was found in the institution's well. The district collector had declared a holiday on Wednesday for all schools and educational institutions in the Shigella-affected areas until 14 June. — *PTI*

'SHE SUFFERED MENTAL STRESS'

Kerala HC acquits woman sentenced for killing baby

KOCHI, 12 JUNE

The Mental Healthcare Act, which protects a person from punishment under the IPC if they attempt suicide, has come to the aid of a woman convicted and sentenced to life for smothering her 15-month-old infant in 2016, as she had also tried to take her own life at that time.

The Kerala High Court acquitted the woman convicted by a Sessions Court in 2023, saying that she was under severe mental stress and had attempted suicide when the incident had occurred.

The Act, which came into effect in 2018, was earlier held by the Kerala High Court to have retrospective effect.

The bench said that the reasoning adopted by the Sessions Judge that the offence under section 309 of the IPC was not attracted merely because the injuries sustained on the wrists and elbows were not sufficient to cause death, "cannot be sustained".

- The Kerala High Court acquitted the woman convicted by a Sessions Court in 2023, saying that she was under severe mental stress and had attempted suicide

The High Court allowed the woman's appeal and set aside her conviction and life sentence.

The woman had challenged the Session Court's November 2023 decision convicting and sentencing her to life for the murder of her child in February 2016.

According to her, she had been subjected to sustained cruelty and harassment by her husband and in-laws ever since her marriage by accusing her of maintaining an illicit relationship with another person, and questioning the paternity of the child.

She has also claimed that she was subjected to persistent demands for additional dowry and was made to suffer both mental and physical cruelty. —*PTI*

Kerala college girls to get Rs 1,000 every month: Govt

KOCHI, 12 JUNE

Kerala Higher Education Minister Roji M John on Friday said the Congress-led United Democratic Front's (UDF) election promise of providing a monthly stipend of Rs 1,000 to all girl students in colleges across the state would be implemented during the current academic year.

John said the stipend scheme, one of the five guarantees announced by the UDF ahead of the Assembly elections, would be incorporated in the state budget.

"The preliminary work for the project has already begun," he said.

Responding to the Opposition's criticism that the state government was remaining silent on the Governor's interventions in Kerala universities, John said such interference in the day-to-day affairs of universities had begun during the previous Left Democratic Front (LDF) government's tenure.

"Appointing vice-chancellors, senate members and syndicate members without consulting the government started during the LDF rule," he alleged.

John reiterated that the UDF government would not support any attempt at 'saffronisation' of the higher education sector in Kerala.

He said the government is working to strengthen the higher education ecosystem and create greater opportunities for students to pursue quality engineering education and career opportunities within Kerala. —*PTI*

2 Tripura militant groups launch rail-road blockade

AGARTALA, 12 JUNE

Surrendered members of the National Liberation Front of Tripura and All Tripura Tiger Force burn a tyre as they block a road in protest at Baramura area, near Agartala, Tripura on Friday —*PTI*

Members of the two militant organisations, which had signed a peace agreement two years ago, launched a 72-hour rail-road blockade in West Tripura district on Friday, demanding the implementation of the Rs 250 crore rehabilitation package announced by the Centre.

The blockade by the National Liberation Front of Tripura (NLFT) and the All Tripura Tiger Force disrupted traffic on NHs and train services.

"We had a meeting with Tribal Welfare Minister Bikash Debbarma yesterday where we reached some positive decisions, but two important demands were not met, forcing us to launch the blockade," NLFT leader Prasenjit Debbarma told reporters.

The government has engaged an agency to implement the rehabilitation package for surrendered militants, which "violates the main spirit of the peace accord," he claimed.

A Memorandum of Settlement was signed, in the presence of Union Home Minister Amit Shah, among the Centre, the Tripura government and the two organisations in September 2024. — *PTI*

INDIA SENDS MEASLES VACCINES, MEDICAL SUPPLIES TO MALDIVES

MALE, 12 JUNE

India dispatched 20,000 doses of measles vaccines and around three tonnes of medical supplies to the Maldives to help address rising measles cases in the island nation.

The Maldives Ministry of Foreign Affairs, in a social media post on Thursday, expressed appreciation for the "timely assistance," saying it reflected the cooperation between the two countries.

India dispatched a consignment of 20,000 doses of measles vaccines and approximately three tonnes of medical supplies to the Maldives, the Ministry of External Affairs said in a press release in New Delhi on Thursday.

The consignment was handed over at a ceremony attended by the Maldives Minister of Health, Family and Welfare, Geela Ali.

The assistance was in keeping with its role as a "trusted first responder" in the region, as per New Delhi's Neighbourhood First policy and Vision MAHASAGAR," which is Mutual and Holistic Advancement for Security and Growth Across Regions, the statement said. — *PTI*

MATRIMONIAL FRAUD

Conman who cheated 25 women arrested

THANE, 12 JUNE

A man has been arrested from Uttar Pradesh for allegedly cheating around 25 women, including physically challenged individuals and divorcees, across multiple states of crores by marrying them through matrimonial ads, a Maharashtra police official said on Friday.

The accused, Anujkumar Chandraprakash Trivedi, was tracked to Greater Noida in UP, and arrested him on 24 May, Mira Bhayandar-Vasai Virar's DCP (Crime) Sandeep Doiphode said.

He operated under aliases like Ajay Agarwal, Ajay Santosh Singh and Jaiprakash Rameshchand Gupta.

A 75-year-old woman lodged a complaint with the Nayanagar police in Maharashtra's Thane district on 4 March 2022, stating that the accused, posing as Ajay Agarwal, had responded to a matrimonial advertisement for her 45-year-old daughter and had married her on 1 March 2019.

- A 75-year-old woman lodged a complaint in Maharashtra's Thane district on 4 March 2022, stating that the accused, posing as Ajay Agarwal, had responded to a matrimonial advertisement for her 45-year-old daughter and had married her

He later allegedly coerced the complainant into selling her flat in Mira Road, promising to purchase a new flat and construct a two-storey house in Taknau, and took Rs 82 lakh from her.

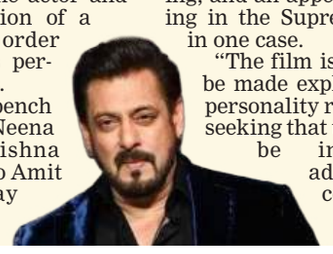
On 22 February 2022, the accused, under the pretext of attending a relative's wedding, took the victim to Delhi, where he allegedly decamped with 33 tolas of jewellery at the railway station. He then forced the woman onto a Mumbai-bound train, switched off his phone, and fled.

Investigations also showed that Trivedi was wanted in another case in Amravati, where he had used the alias Ajay Santosh Singh to cheat a woman of Rs 25 lakh.

The accused's son was found to be helping him and has been named as a co-accused. — *PTI*

DELHI HC GIVES NOTICE ON SALMAN'S PLEA FOR STAY ON 'KALA HIRAN'

NEW DELHI, 12 JUNE



The Delhi High Court on Friday sought the stand of the makers of the film 'Kala Hiran: The Battle for Legal' on a plea by actor Salman Khan seeking a stay on its release.

Khan's counsel argued that the film was purportedly based on the blackbuck poaching case allegedly involving the actor and was in violation of a high court order protecting his personality rights.

A vacation bench of Justice Neena Bansal Krishna issued notice to Amit Jani, Akshay Pandey and others and listed it for hearing on 19 June.

This is part of the 59-year-old Khan's lawsuit for protection of his personality rights. Khan's lawyer contended that the individual in the film looked like him and even dressed like him.

He further submitted that Khan was acquitted in three cases related to the alleged incident of poaching, and an appeal is pending in the Supreme Court in one case.

"The film is sought to be made exploiting my personality rights. I am seeking that the project be injuncted," added the counsel. — *PTI*

SCARS OF Crash

It's been a year since Air India flight AI-171 crashed in Ahmedabad moments after take-off, claiming 260 lives. The horror still lives on in the lives of the sole survivor and families of the victims.

A year on, kin of AI crash victims wait for answers

A year after the Air India flight AI-171 crash in Ahmedabad claimed 260 lives, grieving families are still waiting for answers, with investigators yet to release the final probe report on what caused the disaster.

The Aircraft Accident Investigation Bureau (AAIB) released an interim report in July last year, giving no reason for the crash, though a paragraph in it suggested that fuel switches of the plane's engines got cut off after take-off.

For many families, the wait has been agonising. They cling to memories of loved ones lost in the tragedy while struggling with unanswered questions. With no conclusive report, their grief has compounded, leaving them without closure or clarity about why the accident happened.

A lawyer with a US-based law firm representing more than 130 victim families from India and the UK has requested the central government to release the flight's technical data, saying the information is crucial for those seeking justice and pursuing legal remedies.

Under international aviation rules, a final accident report is expected within a year if possible; if that is not completed, an interim statement can be issued.

On 8 May, Civil Aviation Minister K Rammohan Naidu said the investigation into the tragic crash was in the last stages and the report was likely within a month.

"The crash investigation is in the final stage and could even be completed in a month. However, the investigation is being done by the AAIB and we don't interfere in it. We are giving them all the resources they need," he said.

Federation of Indian Pilots president CS Randhawa on Thursday said they want the AAIB to release the final report only after completing a comprehensive investigation.

Doctors, faculty, students and family members of victims of the Air India AI-171 plane crash attend a tribute event organised on the first anniversary of the tragedy at BJ Medical College and Hospital, in Ahmedabad; family members are seen mourning in Mumbai on Friday —PTI

Referring to media reports suggesting the AAIB may soon issue an interim report, Randhawa said such a move would create further confusion and speculation.

"If there is no conclusion from the investigation, releasing an interim report will only lead to more misunderstandings," he said.

The London-bound AI-171 flight crashed on 12 June afternoon last year, killing 260 people, including 241passengers and crew members and 19 people on the ground. Only one passenger survived.

Former Gujarat chief minister Vijay Rupani was one among those killed in the incident.

The plane crashed on a hostel complex of BJ Medical College 32 seconds after take-off from the Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel Airport in Ahmedabad.

Mike Andrews, lawyer of US-based law firm Beasley Allen representing over 130 victim families from India and the UK, has also demanded release of technical data about the flight from the central government so that families can pursue legal options.

"I appeal to the Indian government to release the FDR (Flight Data Recorder) data so that our experts can conduct an independent evaluation. I think the most important thing these families can have is transparency," Andrews told PTI last year.

Families of the victims have also sought the final investigation report and technical data from the flight data recorder.

In April this year, 10 months after the tragedy, families of 30 victims from across Gujarat met in Ahmedabad and wrote a letter to Prime Minister Narendra Modi, requesting the release of the Cockpit Voice Recorder (CVR) and black box data to uncover the truth behind the tragedy.

They also demanded that the investigation be concluded at the earliest. —PTI

Sole survivor 'struggles with difficult memories'

One year ago, London-bound Flight 171 crashed shortly after taking off from Gujarat's Ahmedabad, killing all people on board but one.

Images of Viswashkumar Ramesh, the lone survivor, walking away from the crash site with bloodstains on his T-shirt and a mobile phone in his hand were carried by media outlets around the world.

Today, one year later, Ramesh says he "struggles with sleep, anxiety and difficult memories".

"People see that I have survived, but they don't always see the challenges that continue behind closed doors," said Ramesh, in a statement released through his advisor Sanjiv Patel.

"A year on, I'm still trying to rebuild my life and support my family as best I can," he said.

Sole survivor Viswashkumar Ramesh walks out of the plane after the crash –PTI

Ramesh, 39, who lives with his family in Leicester, lost his brother Ajay in the disaster, which he says changed him as a person.

"I am grateful to be alive, but survival is only part of the story. What I've faced since then has been far more difficult than I can put into words," said Ramesh, adding that he continues to struggle "physically, psychologically and financially".

Ramesh has instructed UK-based Hudgell Solicitors to represent his interests. The firm is evaluating potential civil claims related to the disaster, while "constructive" talks remain ongoing with representatives of Air India for physical and psychological rehabilitation support.

"Air India remains committed to supporting every individual impacted by the AI171 tragedy with care and compassion," an Air India spokesperson said.

"He (Ramesh) is unable to leave his home without support," said Patel, a Leicester-based community leader who is close to Ramesh's family.

"He is seriously traumatised still, and those scars will remain with him for a long time, if not forever, " Patel said. "All the families who are affected by this (disaster) are suffering trauma. Each and every one of them is going through that journey. And, for Viswash (Ramesh) and his family it has been devastating to an extent that is unimaginable," Patel added. In March, Ramesh met representatives of the Air Accidents Investigation Branch (AAIB) in Ahmedabad in connection with the official investigation into the disaster. —PTI

LETTERS

write to us at salarenglishdigital@gmail.com

JASPAL RANA: INDIAN SHOOTING LOSES ITS FIRST STAR

A prodigy on the shooting range, a maverick off it and an unapologetically obsessed coach, who could identify young talent with awe-inspiring accuracy. Jaspal Rana was arguably the first marksman to capture India's imagination before the sport came of age.

Rana breathed his last at a relatively young age of 49 after battling cardiac issues that came to fore while he was flying back from Munich to Delhi, requiring urgent hospitalisation some days ago.

Rana, who was born in Uttarkashi, was more than a champion shooter. He was the face of a sporting revolution. Long before India emerged as a global force in shooting, a teenaged Rana inspired a generation with his fearless performances on the international stage, becoming one of the first stars of a sport that was then largely unknown to the cricket-mad public in India.

His rise mirrored the rise of Indian shooting itself, and for many, the two stories became inseparable.

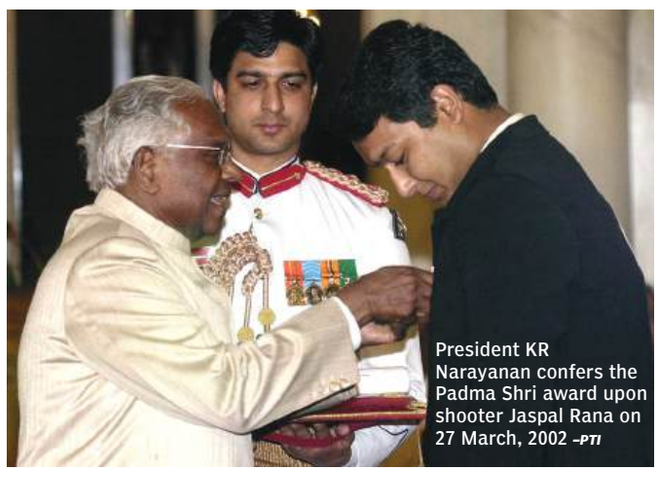
The image remains etched in Indian sporting memory - a teenaged Rana, fresh from his exploits at the 1994 Commonwealth Games in Victoria, being carried on his father's shoulders through a sea of admirers.

At a time when shooting occupied little space in the national sports discourse, the young champion had become an unlikely hero.

That homecoming was not merely a celebration of medals won, it marked the arrival of a man who would go on to shape the destiny of Indian shooting both as a champion and a coach.

That success transformed the fortunes of the Rana family but more significantly, it brought to fore shooting's potential as a medal-yielding sport for India.

Rana, whose father Narayan Singh Rana is a 1971 war veteran, dabbled in politics too and was aligned with both the BJP and Congress at different stages. He could not achieve any electoral success though.



President KR Narayanan confers the Padma Shri award upon shooter Jaspal Rana on 27 March, 2002 –PTI

Jaspal Rana guided Manu Bhaker to her historic double bronze-medal feat at the Paris Olympics as a coach

A national-level gold-medallist at a mere 12 years of age, Rana's career at the highest level spanned nearly two decades, during which he collected medals at the multiple Commonwealth Games and Asian Games.

He was also an Olympian but his only appearance at the 1996 Atlanta Games did not yield a podium finish.

The successes of later champions such as Rajyavardhan Singh Rathore (Silver at 2004 Athens Olympics) and Abhinav Bindra (Gold at 2008 Beijing Olympics) would come years later, but Rana had already helped lay the foundations.

Rana's career was defined as much by grit as by medals.

At the 2006 Asian Games in Doha, he battled through high fever and nausea to win three gold medals, producing one of the most memorable performances by an Indian athlete at the continental showpiece.

That same resilience was evident at the 1995 Commonwealth Shooting Championships in New Delhi, where Rana competed despite suffering from severe food poisoning the previous night.

While then national coach Sunny Thomas anxiously wondered whether his star shooter would even make it to the range, Rana shrugged off the illness and went on to win more than half a dozen medals, displaying the grit that became the hallmark of his resilient personality.

He later dismissed the illness as "nothing big" despite requiring hospitalisation.

The absence of Olympic glory did little to diminish his stature, for his legacy was built on transforming Indian shooting and excelling in disciplines where he was unquestionably among the best in the world.

A favourite of long-time national coach Sunny Thomas, who often remarked that "Jaspal needed little supervision", Rana was widely regarded as one of India's most gifted shooters.

Yet among the many influences on his career, none was greater than that of the late Tibor Gonczol, the Hungarian coach who played a pivotal role in shaping him into a world-class champion.

Their relationship transcended the traditional coach-athlete bond, and Gonczol's departure from India left a void that Rana never truly overcame.

The depth of his admiration was evident years later, as Gonczol's photograph remained a permanent fixture on Rana's social media profiles even as other images changed - a lasting tribute to the mentor who helped mould both the shooter and the man.

Perhaps inspired by the relationship he shared with Gonczol, Rana sought to become more than just a coach. Through his academy in Dehradun and his work with the national team, he invested deeply in his shooters, building bonds that extended well beyond training and competition.

Rana never hesitated to take on the establishment when he felt a principle was at stake.

Whether defending his coaching philosophy, fighting for recognition of his own achievements, or later championing the cause of his protege Manu Bhaker when she was initially overlooked for the Khel Ratna after her Paris Olympics success, he remained unwavering in his beliefs. That uncompromising streak occasionally led to confrontations, but it also reflected the fierce loyalty and conviction that defined Rana. When a dispute with the national federation prevented him from coaching Bhaker in his personal capacity, he refused to walk away.

Barred from entering the field of play at the Karni Singh Shooting Range, Rana famously guided his protege from the spectators' gallery instead, creating an unusual spectacle but also underscoring the lengths he was willing to go for a shooter he believed in.

For Rana, coaching was never just a profession; it was a commitment he defended with the same intensity that had marked his competitive career.

Bhaker's two bronze medals at the Paris Olympics were a moment of immense pride and vindication for Rana, coming three years after the pair had split ahead of the Tokyo Games over differences regarding his rigorous coaching methods.

Rana is seen lifted by his fans upon his return from the 2002 Manchester Commonwealth Games at the IGI airport, in New Delhi, in this file photo dated 6 August, 2002 –PTI

It was also validation of his greatest strength as a coach: spotting and nurturing exceptional talent. Long before Bhaker's success, he had helped mould shooters such as Saurabh Chaudhary and Chinki Yadav from modest backgrounds into world-class performers.

As Olympic silver medallist Vijay Kumar said while paying tribute, "As a fellow competitor and teammate, I will always remember his dedication, passion and contribution to the sport."

Indian shooting lost not just one of its greatest marksmen, but a visionary whose influence would have continued to produce champions and perhaps many more Olympic medals for years to come. —PTI

A DEAL HAS NEVER BEEN CLOSER: IRAN

Pak confirms this; Israel won't leave Lebanon, Syria, Gaza

TEHRAN, 12 JUNE

Iran's Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi posted on X on Friday that the "Islamabad memorandum of understanding has never been closer", indicating that the war with Washington and Israel was likely to end soon.

He added that pending its finalisation, the media should refrain from entering speculation about its content, and that all details will be shared with the public in due course.

Both Iranian and American media have reported heavily on the deal. Iranian state media claimed that the US would pay compensation and evacuate military bases around Iran, while US media has reported extensively on Iran's nuclear programme.

Pakistani Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, who has been mediating between Iran and the US, meanwhile, alleged that there was a "misinformation campaign" by people looking to "sabotage" the deal.

"Setting aside the noise, we can confirm that a final, agreed upon text of the peace deal has been reached and Pakistan is now working closely with both sides to finalise the next steps. Peace has never been this close as it is now," he said.

Earlier in the day, Foreign Ministry spokesperson Esmaeil Baghaei confirmed major developments in the peace talks, but warned "contradictory positions of the US have always caused turbulence and disruption in this process," according to Press TV.

He said that Iran would not accept a deal if its red lines were crossed, although it is unclear what this met. Iran has repeatedly demanded an end to Israel's invasion of Lebanon, and right to negotiate its nuclear programme.

However, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu stated on X, "Iran will not have nuclear weapons. There is full agreement between me and President (Donald) Trump on this issue".

"Had it not been for this campaign, Iran would long ago have had atomic bombs to destroy Israel," he added.

Meanwhile, Israeli Defence Minister Israel Katz said on X, "Israel will not withdraw from the security zones in Lebanon, Syria, and Gaza," which could further jeopardise the deal in Iran's eyes.

The war has killed thousands across Iran and Lebanon, and displaced millions. The Hormuz closure has send economies off their trajectories.

But the real problem, Trump grumbled, was largely a public relations issue.

"They could wave the white flag of surrender. They could say: 'We surrender, we surrender, we're finished, we've had it. The United States is the greatest power, praise be to Allah,'" Trump said on Fox News. "They could say it loud and clear. And the fake news would say it was a great victory for Iran." —*Salar News*

Residents swim and play in the waters of the Strait of Hormuz while cargo ships and commercial vessels lie anchored in the distance off Bandar Abbas, Iran —*AFP*

3 killed by Israeli bombardment in Gaza

At least three Palestinians were killed by Israeli airstrikes in the Gaza strip on Thursday, according to Palestinian state-run WAFA news. Medics said an Israeli strike on a house in Moghrabi Street in Gaza City killed one person. Two other Palestinians were killed in separate airstrikes in the Nuseirat refugee camp in the central Gaza Strip. Nearly 1,000 people have been killed since the Hamas-Israel ceasefire in October.

WHO KILLED THE INDIAN SAILORS? TRUMP & IRAN TRADE BARBS

WASHINGTON, 12 JUNE

Three Indian sailors went missing and died after a drone hit a ship carrying seafarers from the country. While US CENTCOM released footage of a strike targeting a vessel near Oman on Thursday and multiple reputable internation media outlets reported that the strike was carried out by Washington, President Donald Trump blamed Iran.

"Their (Iran's) totally rebuffed Drone attack last night against Indian Ships leaving the Hormuz Strait is TOTALLY UNACCEPTABLE," Trump claimed in a post on Truth Social.

In the same post, Trump also accused Iran of leaking the terms of the peace deal to the media that had nothing to do with the points under discussion.

However, Iran criticised the "US attacks" on merchant ships "threaten global peace and security".

Iran's Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Esmaeil Baqaei extended condolences to the bereaved families and the Indian government. "We extend our sympathies to the families and friends of the slain Indian sailors and offer our sincere condolences to the Indian people and government," he stated on X.

He urged the international community to hold the US accountable, adding that its conduct "continues to threaten global peace and security while endangering the freedom of navigation."

He further said that the incidents "stand as clear evidence of America's ongoing policy of armed robbery and State piracy."

India on Friday summoned US charge d'affaires Jason Meeks and told him that the American military's "lethal and deadly" and the strikes are "unacceptable". —*PTI*

HAMAS CO-FOUNDER RELEASED FROM ISRAELI DETENTION

TEL AVIV, 12 JUNE

Hassan Yousef, co-founder of Palestinian militant group Hamas, has been released from Israeli administrative detention, per local and international media reports quoting his son, Owais.

Hamas also released an official statement confirming his release, congratulating him and his family, and claiming that he has spent more than 20 years in prison cumulatively during his lifetime.

Yousef had been detained since October 2023. He was allegedly not given a trial and has not been charged with anything. He was reportedly released near Hebron and taken to a hospital in Ramallah. Recent footage verified by international media appears to show him in a hospital bed with his arm in a sling.

Yousef is a senior leader of Hamas in the West Bank, having co-founded the group in 1987 along with Palestinian members of the Muslim Brotherhood. —*Salar News*

Pak hikes defence budget by 17.6%

ISLAMABAD, 12 JUNE

Pakistan on Friday hiked its defence spending by 17.6 per cent to PKRs 3,000 billion, marking a significant increase from last year.

Last year, the government allocated PKRs 2550 billion for defence, which was 20 per cent higher than the previous year.

Minister for Finance and Revenue Muhammad Aurangzeb said the total federal budget is estimated at PKRs 18,771 billion and the "GDP growth target is 4 per cent".

Among the key expenses, the federal government will spend PKRs 8,054 billion on debt service and interest payments. Another PKRs 1169 billion has been allocated for pension expenditure and PKRs 1091 billion for subsidies.

The size of the federal government Public Sector Development Program (PSDP) has been set at PKRs 1,000 billion for the next fiscal year.

Pakistan's first Hangor-class submarine built under an agreement with China arrived at Karachi Port on Thursday. The word 'Hangor' comes from Bengali meaning 'shark', honouring the pre-1971 traditions when Bangladesh was part of Pakistan. These are highly advanced, stealth-capable attack submarines. China is to build the initial four submarines, while the other four will be built at the Karachi Shipyard and Engineering Works via a transfer-of-technology, under the 2015 deal — *X@PRESOFPAKISTAN*

Among the income, the Federal Board of Revenue (FBR) has set a tax collection target of PKRs 15,264 billion, while the government expects to generate PKRs 5,336 billion in non-tax revenue.

For the upcoming fiscal year, the government has set an export target of USD 32.8 billion and an import target of USD 70 billion.

No new development schemes were announced. Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif said the budget promised "measures for tax relief and economic progress".—*PTI*

US can collect 10% tariffs, says court

WASHINGTON, 12 JUNE

The US government can continue collecting the 10% worldwide tariff it imposed in February while legal challenges to the levies continue to work their way through the courts, a federal court ruled on Thursday.

The Court of Appeals for the Federal Circuit in Washington handed a procedural win to the Trump administration, concluding that its case was "likely to succeed on the merits."

At issue are temporary 10 per cent worldwide tariffs President Donald Trump imposed after the Supreme Court in February struck down even broader double-digit tariffs he had imposed last year on almost every country. The new tariffs, invoked under Section 122 of the Trade Act of 1974, are set to expire 24 July. Section 122, which had never been used to justify import taxes before, allows the president to impose worldwide tariffs of up to 15% for 150 days, after which congressional approval is needed to extend them.

Section 122 is aimed at what it calls "fundamental international payments problems." In dispute is whether that wording covers trade deficits — the gap between what the US sells other countries and what it buys from them — as the Trump administration contends. The case could head to the Supreme Court. —*PTI*

US could prosecute 'super-sponsors' of migrant children

WASHINGTON, 12 JUNE

The Trump administration has identified 15,000 cases of adults gaining custody of multiple immigrant children who enter the US without a parent, signalling a push to prosecute prolific child sponsors.

Officials said they are investigating so-called "super-sponsors" — those who gained custody of more than three unrelated children — to determine whether the sponsors took the kids in fraudulently.

Taking custody of multiple unrelated migrant children is not a crime. Under Joe Biden, officials tried to release children to eligible adult sponsors within 30 days, reuniting many families. But the approach also yielded errors, with some children being released to adults who forced them to work illegally. —*PTI*

South Korean ex-prez Yoon gets 30-yr jail

SEOUL, 12 JUNE

South Korea's former president Yoon Suk Yeol and ex-defense minister Kim Yong Hyun have been sentenced to 30 years in prison for ordering drone flights over Pyongyang in 2024. The court claims Yoon aimed to escalate tensions with North Korea and justify declaring martial law. Earlier, Yoon was sentenced to life imprisonment for rebellion over his brief martial law declaration in December 2024. North Korea accused Seoul of flying drones to drop propaganda leaflets in October; Seoul denied confirmation. Yoon's lawyers said the flights responded to North Korea's balloons earlier that year.

Prosecutors accused Yoon of trying to create a war situation. Yoon declared martial law citing opposition to his government, but it lasted only six hours.

Yoon was impeached, suspended, and arrested in July 2025.

The rebellion conviction is under appeal. —*PTI*

BRITISH ARTIST DAVID HOCKNEY DIES AT 88

LONDON, 12 JUNE

Artist David Hockney, whose paintings of pools shimmering in the Los Angeles sunshine became icons of 20th-century art, died on Thursday, his publicist said. He was 88.

Hockney was born 9 July, 1937 in the north of England, but lived much of his life in Southern California, making its sun-drenched suburban views a major motif. Later in life he returned to Europe, finding renewed inspiration in the wooded hills of his native Yorkshire and the fields and trees of France's Normandy region. He became one of the UK's most treasured artists, his works selling for record prices at auction.

As an openly gay man, Hockney's early works like "We Two Boys Together Clinging" and "Two Men in a Shower" celebrated gay relationships when homosexuality was still illegal in Britain.

"The moment I first sold pictures to earn a living, I felt rich. I've been rich ever since," he told the AP in 1995. "I didn't have much money but I did what I wanted. ... You are a rich man if you do the things you want to do." —*PTI*

Iranian among migrants deported from US to CAR

BANGUI, 12 JUNE

An Iranian woman is among around two dozen migrants set to arrive in the Central African Republic on a US deportation flight, lawyers said. The flight includes individuals from Iran, Jordan, Armenia, Turkey, Georgia, and Afghanistan. The US has used secret agreements to deport thousands to nearly twenty countries, including the Central African Republic, a conflict-affected, impoverished nation. Three Iranian women facing deportation received court orders to halt their removal, citing credible fears of persecution based on politics or religion. An elderly Syrian man also was temporarily stopped. The US Department of Homeland Security declined to comment. The country's ties with Russia's Wagner group and Iran raise security concerns.—*PTI*

US imposes sanctions on Cuban oil company

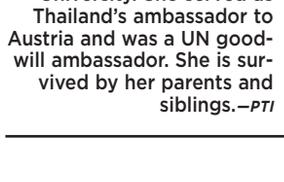
SAN JUAN, 12 JUNE

The US government announced sanctions against Cuba's state-owned oil and gas firm, Cupet, expected to heighten tensions. Secretary of State Marco Rubio said key assets were "unlawfully expropriated from American owners years ago" and accused Cuba of weaponising energy. He claimed Cuba's leaders divert energy resources for their own benefit, and without evidence, alleged officials resell scarce energy and hoard supplies for military and repression. Cuba's government did not respond. Cupet's fuel sales are almost nonexistent and rationed. The move follows sanctions on President Miguel Diaz-Canel and others. Rubio said all property of Cupet in US control is blocked, adding that President Trump seeks a future with more freedom for Cubans. —*PTI*

US' Myanmar scholar Min Zin arrested in China

BANGKOK, 12 JUNE

US scholar Min Zin, known for writings on Myanmar and Chinese foreign policy, has been detained by Chinese authorities on suspicion of espionage, China's foreign ministry announced. Spokesman Lin Jian said Min Zin was suspected of "engaging in espionage activities that endanger China's national security." An activist said Min Zin disappeared on 3 June after visiting Kunming for a conference. He had visited China multiple times. Min Zin, a former student activist in Myanmar's 1988 uprising, sought asylum in the US and is a PhD candidate at UC Berkeley. He founded ISP Myanmar, a think tank focused on Chinese-Myanmar relations.—*PTI*



— *ANI*

Thailand Princess known for legal work dies at 47

BANGKOK, 12 JUNE

Thailand's Princess Bajrakitiyabha Mahidol, daughter of King Maha Vajiralongkorn, has died aged 47, according to the Bureau of the Royal Household. She passed away on Thursday evening in a Bangkok hospital after being in a coma for three years. Active in justice reform, she led the "Inspire" project to rehabilitate incarcerated Thai women. She was hospitalised in December 2022 after falling unconscious during dog training, with the palace citing a mycoplasma infection. Born on 7 December 1978, she studied law at Thammasat University and earned a master's and doctorate from Cornell University. She served as Thailand's ambassador to Austria and was a UN goodwill ambassador. She is survived by her parents and siblings.—*PTI*

DRONE WARFARE

War now longer than WW1; Ukraine hits Crimea

KYIV, 12 JUNE

The Russia-Ukraine war is now longer than World War 1, with casualties mounting on either side. Russia's all-out invasion of Ukraine began in February 2022, with President Vladimir Putin at the time seemingly confident that it would be a quick skirmish, but as of 11 June, has now gone on for 1,569 days, exceeding the length of the 1914-1918 war that reshaped the globe.

The comparisons between the two are immense – soldiers fire from trenches hold the position with fortifications, even as both sides have racked up casualties in the tens of thousands. This is one of the only conflicts since the Iran-Iraq war between 1980-1988 that such styles of warfare had been used.

Ukraine triggered the worst fuel crisis in Crimea after repeatedly attacking its oil depots —*SCREENGRAB*

The Russia-Ukraine war has also revolutionised drone warfare. Drones buzz around Ukraine daily, becoming ritual sound for civilians. Even as President Volodymyr Zelenskyy presses Western allies for more military aid, Ukraine's drone defence system has become invaluable.

Russia deploys a mixture of thousands of cheaply built drones, often along the lines of the Iranian Shahed models, and more expensive missiles. The cheaper drones, the US and its Gulf allies learnt, were not cost effective to down with expensive systems. Instead, Ukraine's home-grown techniques proved to be the need of the hour. In May, Zelenskyy said Ukraine had downed 90 per cent of Russian drones and 70 per cent of its missiles, up from the 55 per cent last year.

UKRAINE ON THE OFFENSIVE

Ukraine has also been increasingly on the offensive recently. On Friday, Ukraine triggered the worst fuel crisis in Crimea since Russia annexed the Black Sea peninsula in 2014 by striking fuel depots, refineries, pipelines, tanker trucks and transport routes supplying the region.

Kyiv has also targeted the land corridor linking Russia to Crimea through occupied southern Ukraine and struck the Chonhar Bridge, disrupting the movement of fuel, troops and ammunition. The attacks have led to fuel rationing, long queues at petrol stations and soaring prices.

Crimea is crucial to Russia's war effort as a major military hub and logistics base supporting operations in southern Ukraine. Since the start of the war, Ukraine has steadily targeted Russian military assets in Crimea, including warships, airfields and the Kerch Bridge. —*Salar News*

Ukraine deploys fully autonomous drones

Ukrainian interceptor drones are now shooting down Russian Shahed attack UAVs "autonomously", utilising a new AI technology that automates 95 per cent of the interception process from launch to impact, according to the Defence Ministry. An operator simply selects the target in a specialised interface and issues the strike command.

The software navigates the interceptor drone to the target without manual piloting. As the interceptor approaches, its AI locks onto the enemy drone. The "human-in-the-loop" lets the operator cancel the attack at any moment. It was developed by MaXon Systems.

Traders gain ₹9.66 lakh cr as markets end higher

Global stocks rally as US says it ended war with Iran

MUMBAI, 12 JUNE

Stock investors became richer by Rs 9.66 lakh crore on Friday following markets ending sharply higher on Friday, with the BSE Sensex climbing 1,695.40 points (2.30 per cent) to settle at 75,527.90, and the NSE Nifty surging 461.30 points (1.99 per cent) to close at 23,622.90.

The rise was in tandem with a rise in global markets and a decline in crude oil prices after US President Donald Trump said a deal to end the conflict with Iran is nearly finalised, after he called off planned military strikes.

Of the 30-Sensex firms, Bajaj Finance, Larsen & Toubro, InterGlobe Aviation, Titan, Eternal and HDFC Bank were among the winners. Tech Mahindra and Power Grid were the laggards.

Expectations of a US-Iran diplomatic breakthrough and the cancellation of military action eased fears of a broader conflict, Hariprasad K, Research Analyst and Founder, Livelong Wealth, said. A major positive for India was the sharp decline in crude oil prices, he further added.

Brent crude dropped 3.98 per cent to USD 86.78 per barrel. Foreign Institutional Investors offloaded equities worth Rs 1,987.09 crore on Thursday.

In the previous session, Sensex declined by 150.63 points, or 0.20 per cent, to 73,832.55. Nifty fell 53.35 points, or 0.23 per cent, to 23,161.60. —*Agencies*

Rupee climbs 77P to 95.08 amid oil price drop

MUMBAI, 12 JUNE

The rupee rose 77 paise to close at 95.08 (provisional) against the US dollar, supported by falling global oil prices amid US-Iran negotiations. Traders said Trump's remarks about an imminent Iran deal and the halting of military strikes boosted market confidence. Brent crude dipped 4.25 per cent to USD 86.54 per barrel. The rupee opened at 95.40, trading between 94.95 and 95.53 before settling. It had fallen 60 paise the previous day. Anil Kumar Bhansali, Head of Treasury at Finrex, stated, "The rupee rose as oil prices fell to USD 88.58 levels after three months." The dollar index was down 0.20 per cent at 99.65. Domestic equity markets soared, with Sensex up 1,695.40 points and Nifty climbing 461.30 points. Foreign investors offloaded Rs 1,987.09 crore in shares.—*PTI*

3 crore women-led firms registered on Udyam Portal

NEW DELHI, 12 JUNE

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman highlighted the rise of women-led enterprises in India, with over 3 crore registered on Udyam Portal. She noted, "With over Rs 16 lakh crore disbursed under PM MUDRA Yojana to women, entrepreneurship is a powerful driver of women-led development." She added that over 32 crore women are linked to formal banking through the PM Jan Dhan Yojana, with loans reaching Rs 76 lakh crore in 2025. Sitharaman said, "Greater access to credit, savings and opportunities is helping women shape India's growth story." Modi emphasised women's significant role across sectors, stating the NDA government's efforts have created momentum in women-led development, involving over 10 crore rural women and 48 per cent of start-ups having at least one woman director.—*PTI*

India gets first homegrown AI model Varya

NEW DELHI, 12 JUNE

Avataar.ai on Friday unveiled Varya, an indigenous video AI model aimed at making frontier video technology affordable and culturally relevant for India. Developed under the IndiaAI Mission using subsidised national AI infrastructure. Varya uses a distillation technique that reduces video generation steps from 50 to four, at a claimed cost of Rs 0.48 per second — up to ten times cheaper than comparable global models. The model is designed to represent India's regional diversity, festivals, communities, and public spaces, with applications in education, commerce, governance, citizen services, and digital storytelling for MSMEs. Ministry of Electronics and IT Secretary S Krishnan called the launch a milestone for India's AI journey. —*ANI*

Forex reserves fall by $711M to $682B: RBI

MUMBAI, 12 JUNE

India's forex reserves decreased by USD 711 million, reaching USD 681.610 billion for the week ending 5 June, according to the Reserve Bank of India (RBI). In the previous week, reserves had risen from USD 938 million to USD 682.321 billion. Foreign currency assets, a major component, declined USD 2.704 billion to USD 543.444 billion. The RBI noted that foreign currency assets include effects of appreciation or depreciation of non-US units such as euro, pound, and yen. Meanwhile, gold reserves increased USD 1.975 billion to USD 114.575 billion, and SDRs rose USD 18 million to USD 18.765 billion. India's IMF reserve position stood at USD 4.826 billion during the week. —*PTI*

FOR MULTI-LISTED STOCKS

SEBI proposes uniform price band framework

NEW DELHI, 12 JUNE

Market regulator SEBI proposed a harmonised framework for determining base price for pre-open call auctions and a price band mechanism for securities listed on multiple stock exchanges.

In a consultation paper issued on Thursday, SEBI said it wants to address price disparities in illiquid stocks and improve market efficiency.

Stock exchanges currently set scrip-wise price bands based on their own previous-day closing prices.

Although the bands are coordinated across exchanges, SEBI noted that if a stock does not trade on an exchange, there is no mechanism to update its price band there, potentially causing prices of the same security to gradually diverge across exchanges.

The consultation paper stated that "non-trading of scrip on one of the exchanges and a persistent buy side pressure along with the practice of application of price band on the previous day closing price has been causing significant price divergence in the closing prices of the scrips across the exchanges." It further noted that "such divergence also holds the potential of non-trading of the scrip on one of the exchanges."

The matter was deliberated by SEBI's Secondary Market Advisory Committee on 16-17 April. Based on the committee's recommendations and discussions with stock exchanges, SEBI has proposed a common methodology for determining price bands and base prices. SEBI has invited public comments on the proposals until 2 July. —*ANI*

Singapore HC stays order against Byju Raveendran

SINGAPORE, 12 JUNE

The General Division of the High Court of the Republic of Singapore on 10 June granted a stay on parts of the recent civil contempt order, dated 25 May, against Edutech entrepreneur **Byju Raveendran**. This means that Raveendran is not required to surrender to the court, and no term of imprisonment takes effect due to the order. An appeal against the contempt finding has also been filed.

According to the counsels for Raveendran, the contempt finding arose from contested document-disclosure and other obligations in ongoing arbitration proceedings.

J Michael McNutt, Senior Litigation Advisor to Byju Raveendran and the Founders, Lazareff Le Bars said, "It is not a finding on the merits of the underlying dispute, and it is certainly not a finding of fraud, dishonesty, diversion of funds, or personal wrongdoing. No court, in any jurisdiction, has made such a finding against Raveendran."

McNutt added, "We maintain that Raveendran did not violate any Singapore Court Order, intentionally or otherwise."

Speaking on the development, Raveendran said, "I welcome the stay granted by the Singapore Court. At a time when parties have been engaged in settlement discussions, it is unfortunate that a misleading impression of wrongdoing is being created. I remain committed to correcting this narrative through the appropriate legal process." —*ANI*

NORTHEAST EXPLORATION

Govt signs MoU for oil in Assam, Nagaland

NEW DELHI, 12 JUNE

The Ministry of Petroleum & Natural Gas on Friday signed a Memorandum of Understanding with Assam and Nagaland to boost domestic oil and gas exploration. The agreement aims at unlocking hydrocarbon potential, attracting investment and creating jobs, Union Minister Hardeep Singh Puri said.

With Assam holding nearly 22 per cent of India's crude oil and 15 per cent of its natural gas, and Nagaland's Naga-Schuppen Belt rich in untapped hydrocarbons, the outlook for exploration and production in the Northeast is highly promising.

Petroleum Ministry signs MoU with Assam and Nagaland to boost oil, gas production –*X/HARDEEPSPURI*

Puri said on social media that "With the signing of a historic tripartite MoU between the Ministry, Nagaland and Assam, India's quest towards increasing domestic exploration and production of hydrocarbons under the visionary leadership of PM @narendramodi Ji!" Adding that North East India gave birth to India's petroleum industry, "the North East gave birth to India's petroleum industry; today, it stands ready to power the next chapter of India's energy journey as Nagaland will produce oil and gas again after 31 years," he added.

According to Puri, the latest MoU provides certainty to the investors, facilitating operational continuity and creating an environment for long-term investment and contributing significantly to the economic development of surrounding communities and the entire NE Region." —*ANI*

MAY RETAIL INFLATION CLIMBS TO 3.93%

NEW DELHI, 12 JUNE

Retail inflation rose to 3.93 per cent in May from 3.48 per cent in April, driven by higher food prices, as per National Statistical data on Friday.

Food inflation rose to 4.78 per cent in May from 4.2 per cent in April, data showed.

Precious metals, tomato, ginger, raisin, and monacca had the highest inflation. Potato, peas, cumin and vehicles had the lowest inflation in May.

The RBI, which factors in CPI for monetary policy, is mandated to keep inflation at 4 per cent. Last week raised inflation projection for FY26 from 4.6 to 5.1 per cent.

Since May, petrol prices have raised by 7.4 per cent and diesel by 8.4 per cent. The RBI said the increase shows a impact of about 36 basis points on headline inflation, with second-order effects set to reflect in CPI in the coming months. —*PTI*

TCS launches India's first Oracle AI Data Platform Lab in Kolkata

KOLKATA, 12 JUNE

Tata Consultancy Services on Friday launched India's first Oracle AI Data Platform Lab and Centre of Excellence (CoE) here to help companies adapt to artificial intelligence and data-driven transformations faster.

The facility at Delta Park Lords in Kolkata has been set up in collaboration with Oracle. It will support customers in addressing challenges such as fragmented data systems, slow analytics cycles, limited AI scalability and operational inefficiencies, the IT major said.It added that the lab will leverage the Oracle AI Data Platform to help organisations deploy AI-powered applications and automation.

In a statement, TCS said that it would establish such centres in four more Indian cities over the next three years.

"The facility is designed to accelerate the journey from ideation to experimentation to full-scale deployment," said Sudipto Ray, Vice President and Global Head, Oracle Practice, TCS.

Oracle India Head of Alliances and Channels Technology Arvind Mehra said the initiative would help customers convert data into business outcomes through AI-driven insights and intelligent automation.

The company said it has a centralised team of 26,000 Oracle-skilled professionals across India to support clients' AI initiatives. —*PTI*

Tata Sons board holds meeting in Mumbai

MUMBAI, 12 JUNE

The Tata Sons board convened for a significant meeting on Friday at its headquarters, Bombay House, in Mumbai. The high-profile gathering brought together the group's top leadership and influential independent directors to deliberate on issues, including structural transitions, capital allocation strategy, and the group's debated regulatory stance.

Among those involved were Executive Chairman Natarajan Chandrasekaran, alongside Noel Naval Tata, Chairman of Tata Trusts, whose presence underscores the strengthening governance ties between the trusts and the holding company. TV Narendran, CEO of Tata Steel, also attended, representing the industrial side.

They were joined by independent directors including Anita George, Harish Manwani, and Venu Srinivasan, Chairman Emeritus of TVS Motor, whose oversight is vital as the board eyes a multi-billion-dollar shift to semiconductor manufacturing, aviation, and digital platforms.

Specific resolutions remain undisclosed, the agenda focused on leadership continuity for Chandrasekaran, whose tenure ends in early 2027, and performance audits of ventures like Air India and Tata Neu.

The board also reviewed its stance on RBI's investment mandates following Tata's efforts to clear debt and maintain its private status. The directors departed without revealing outcomes, but Chandrasekaran's reassuring smile hinted at a confident, unified vision for Tata Sons' next chapter. —*ANI*

Tryfacta files papers for USD 100-150M GIFT City IPO

NEW DELHI, 12 JUNE

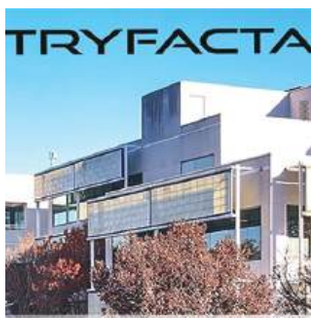
US-based workforce and tech solutions provider Tryfacta Inc filed draft papers with the International Financial Services Centres Authority (IFSCA) for a USD 100-150 million IPO on GIFT City exchanges in Gujarat.

If listed, the California-based firm will be the first US company to list equity shares in India through the GIFT City framework.

The draft offer document, filed on Thursday, comprises a fresh issue of 13.3 million shares and an offer for sale of up to 3 million shares by selling shareholder Ratika Tyagi.

The shares are proposed to be listed on NSE and India International Exchange (India INX). Proceeds will go towards repaying working capital and funding acquisitions.

Founded in 1996, Tryfacta Inc provides AI-enabled technology solutions to US federal agencies as well as state, local, and education (SLED) bodies. —*ANI*



RAISES $75 BILLION

SpaceX listing tests big-ticket IPO for AI firms

TEXAS, 12 JUNE

SpaceX's mega stock market listing will be keenly watched for signals on investor interest for the two AI-heavyweights that are slated to go public later this year.

Both Anthropic and OpenAI have filed confidentially for their stock market debut amid the widespread frenzy surrounding AI technology. Shares of AI semiconductor makers have zoomed manifold, catapulting some of them into the trillion-dollar club.

SpaceX raised a record-breaking USD 75 billion from its IPO at a fixed price of USD 135 per share. The IPO drew interest from both retail investors and big asset managers, family offices and high-net-worth individuals.

A satirical inflatable of Elon Musk was put up at Times Square, New York –*x*

WSJ reported that BlackRock put in an order to buy shares worth USD 5 billion. The SpaceX IPO, which has become the largest so far, valuing the company at USD 1.77 trillion, will make its owner, Elon Musk, the world's first trillionaire as soon as the shares are listed on Friday.

A larger chunk of SpaceX shares than what is usually allocated will go to retail investors as Musk relies on his fans. Concerns around its valuation have been raised as the company remains unprofitable with a loss of USD 5 billion. Exchanges will be under pressure to demonstrate that they can handle big-ticket listings.

SpaceX's USD 75 billion proceeds are more than double those of the previous record holder, Aramco. The IPO has made the rocket, satellite and AI company the first US trillion-dollar debut and seventh-largest US company by market capitalisation. —*ANI*

Gujarat firm makes world's 1st ETFA via flow chemistry

NEW DELHI, 12 JUNE

Speciality chemicals maker Anupam Rasayan India on Friday said it has become the first company in the world to commercially produce Ethyl trifluoroacetate (ETFA) using proprietary continuous flow chemistry.

ETFA is a critical building block and reagent used in the synthesis of a wide range of organic compounds used in pharmaceuticals, life sciences and performance materials sectors.

Flow chemistry is a technique where chemical reactions are run in a continuously flowing stream rather than in traditional batch flasks. It is increasingly used in the production of fine chemicals, polymers, and active pharmaceutical ingredients (APIs), allowing researchers to perform hazardous transformations safely.

The Gujarat-based firm said its platform has many advantages when compared with conventional batch processes, such as safer processes, better reproducibility, improved scalability, higher operational efficiency and a lower environmental footprint.

Anupam Rasayan India Ltd is a manufacturer focused on speciality chemicals such as agrochemicals and pharmaceuticals. —*PTI*

MEXICO STARTS WITH BIG WIN

US and Canada prepare for openers

Mexico's Raul Jimenez celebrates after scoring his side's second goal against South Africa in Mexico City

NEW JERSEY, 12 JUNE

Mexico opened the World Cup on Thursday with a dominant 2-0 win over South Africa in front of a boisterous home crowd at Mexico City's Azteca Stadium.

On Friday, the United States and Canada both get their opportunity for a fast start in front of their respective home countries.

Julián Quiñones scored the first goal of the World Cup in the ninth minute, booting a cross through the legs of South Africa goalkeeper Ronwen Williams.

El Tri made it 2-0 midway through the second half when veteran Raúl Jiménez delivered a header that found the back of the net.

In Thursday's nightcap, South Korea rallied for a 2-1 win over the Czech Republic in Guadalajara, Mexico. All three goals were scored in an entertaining second half.

RAUL JIMENEZ'S STAR MOMENT

Raul Jimenez finally had his star moment in the World Cup for Mexico. The 35-year-old striker burst into tears after scoring El Tri's second goal against South Africa as Mexico opened the 2026 World Cup with a 2-0 win.

It was the first World Cup goal for Jimenez, who suffered a skull fracture while playing for Wolverhampton on 29 November 2020, and had to undergo lifesaving surgery. Within two weeks, Jimenez was back at training. He fully recovered several months later, but the injury forced him to wear protective headgear for the rest of his career.

Jimenez has suffered other injuries and dips in form in the years since, including a poor 2022 World Cup. He failed to score as Mexico failed to reach the knockout stage for the first time since 1978.

His biggest moment for Mexico may have been a bicycle kick in a victory against Panama in qualifying for the 2014 World Cup, which was honoured as the CONCACAF goal of the year. He was a reserve player for El Tri during that tournament in Brazil. —*PTI*

Hwang In-beom sparks South Korea's 2-1 comeback win

South Korea's Son Heung-min congratulates Hwang In-beom after he scored their first goal during the world cup group A match in Mexico —*PTI*

GUADALAJARA, 12 JUNE

Hwang In-beom scored a goal and set up another as South Korea rallied to defeat the Czech Republic 2-1 in the second match of the 2026 World Cup on Thursday night.

After a lackluster first half in which both teams were jeered as they left the field, the Czech Republic took the lead in the 59th minute on a header by captain Ladislav Krejci after a long throw-in into the penalty area.

South Korea equalized in the 67th, when Hwang scored after faking a shot with a nifty move to clear two Czech players. The midfielder who plays for Dutch club Feyenoord then made the cross from the right flank for Oh Hyeon-gyu's decisive strike in the 80th in a match played in front of hundreds of empty seats at Guadalajara Stadium.

The South Korean squad celebrated with its fans behind one of the goals after the final whistle. Players later posed for a photo with the fans behind them.

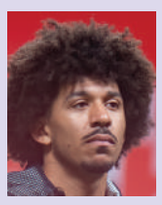
"It was our first game and a very difficult one," South Korea coach Hong Myung-bo said. "The win itself makes me happy, but what's even more positive is that our boys won by not giving up. I knew that we were more than capable of winning, so at 1-1, I told the boys to keep playing the way we've been playing."

It was South Korea's first opening World Cup win since it beat Greece in 2010 in South Africa. South Korea beat European opponent in the tournament for a third straight time, following wins over Portugal in 2022 and Germany in 2018. South Korea is making its 11th straight World Cup appearance and 12th overall, the most of any Asian country. Its best result was a fourth-place finish at the tournament it co-hosted with Japan in 2002. Since then, the South Koreans have never gone beyond round 16. —*PTI*

INJURED US DEFENDER CHRIS RICHARDS MAY PLAY

INGLEWOOD, 12 JUNE

Top US defender Chris Richards is officially healthy enough to play in the World Cup opener less than four weeks after a significant ankle injury.



Coach Mauricio Pochettino said on Thursday that Richards "is available to be selected" when the Americans host Paraguay on Friday night. "We will decide whether he'll start from the beginning of the game or (come off) the bench," Pochettino added.

Richards is considered the team's top central defender and a key component of the World Cup starting lineup, but he got injured 17 May while playing for English club Crystal Palace. Eagles manager Oliver Glasner said he believed Richards tore two ligaments in his ankle, but the exact nature of the injury hasn't been disclosed.

Richards missed the Americans' two friendlies over the past two weeks, but he said Wednesday that his ankle was "feeling good. Maybe a little swollen, but nothing tape can't help. If there's any time to sacrifice yourself, it's now." —*PTI*

Messi is the 'alien' in football: Mehtab

NEW DELHI, 12 JUNE

Calling Lionel Messi an "alien" who makes you think he's "not from this world", former India midfielder Mehtab Hossain believes defending champions Argentina remain the team to beat.

Speaking to PTI, Mehtab, who represented India in 33 matches and scored two goals, said the World No 1 side has the depth, quality and the emotional motivation to give their talisman one final shot at glory. "Argentina is my favourite. Because of Messi," said the former defensive midfielder. "They have a young striker like Julian Alvarez, a midfielder like Enzo Fernandez, a defender like Cristian Romero and a goalkeeper like Emiliano Martinez, who won the best goalkeeper award last World Cup.

The former East Bengal captain, who enjoyed a decade long career with the red-and-gold winning Federation Cup thrice, said, "This is the last World Cup for Messi. Every player is ready to give everything for his last World Cup.

"Messi is still playing in MLS, scoring goals, providing assists and scoring free-kicks. As long as he plays, he is the most talented player. —*PTI*

Colombian team arrives in Guadalajara

GUADALARAJA, 12 JUNE

Colombia has started its World Cup preparations in Mexico ahead of its games against Uzbekistan and Congo in Group K.

The team arrived in Guadalajara on Wednesday and had its first training session in the host city on Thursday. The session was open to the media and some local residents.

Colombia, ranked 14th by FIFA, started its World Cup preparations on home soil and then trained in California before making it to camp in Guadalajara.

Colombia plays Uzbekistan next Wednesday in Mexico City. Its second match will be against Congo on 23 June in Guadalajara. Its third game, against Portugal, will be held on 27 June in Miami. Both Guadalajara and Mexico City will present challenges to players because of the altitude.

Colombia had its best World Cup result in 2014 in Brazil, when it reached the quarterfinals. It was eliminated in the Round of 16 in 2018 in Russia. Colombia did not qualify for the tournament in Qatar in 2022. —*PTI*

Bengaluru to host 4th Global Chess League

NEW DELHI, 12 JUNE: The Global Chess League on Friday announced that its fourth season will be held in Bengaluru from 3 September. The GCL, which is a joint initiative of Tech Mahindra and FIDE, has changed the format including franchise teams, mixed gender lineups, and rapid fire matches. Season 4 will feature the world's leading players competing in a team-based format. Gourav Rakshit, Commissioner of the Global Chess League, Tech Mahindra Global Chess League, said, "The Global Chess League was created to transform chess into a truly global spectator sport. Bringing Season 4 to Bengaluru feels like a defining moment, not just for the league, but for the evolution of the game itself. This is where the next chapter begins." Arkady Dvorkovich, President of FIDE, said, "We are delighted to bring Season 4 of the Global Chess League to Bengaluru. India continues to be at the forefront of the global chess movement, and Bengaluru provides the perfect setting to build on this momentum. —*PTI*

Australian Open Super 500: Sindhu storms into semis; Tanvi crashes out

SYDNEY, 12 JUNE

Two-time Olympic medallist PV Sindhu stormed into the women's singles semi-finals of the Australian Open Super 500 badminton tournament with a commanding straight-game victory, here on Friday.

The third-seeded Indian outclassed Chinese Taipei's Chen Su Yu 21-6, 21-9 in a one-sided quarter-final contest that lasted just 27 minutes.

The former world champion Sindhu will next face top seed Akane Yamaguchi of Japan, who ended the impressive run of Indian teenager Tanvi Sharma with a 21-14, 21-14 victory in 32 minutes.

Sindhu, incidentally, holds a narrow 15-13 head-to-head advantage over the world No. 3 Japanese.

Sindhu dominated proceedings from the outset, using her superior reach and court coverage to keep her opponent under constant pressure.

She raced through the opening game before maintaining the momentum in the second to seal her place in the last-four.

The semi-final appearance marks a significant boost for Sindhu, who has endured an inconsistent season and has been searching for rhythm on the BWF World Tour and is in search for her first title since Syed Modi International in December 2024.

Earlier, Sindhu had defeated compatriot Isharani Baruah in the pre-quarterfinals to advance to the last-eight. —*PTI*

India's PV Sindhu returns a shot during women's singles quarterfinal match against Indonesia's Gregoria Mariska Tunjung at the India Open 2025 badminton tournament, in New Delhi, on Friday —*PTI*

T20 OPENER: WI BEAT LANKA BY 7 WICKETS

KINGSTON, 12 JUNE

Rovman Powell hit a six in the final over Thursday to clinch a seven-wicket win for the West Indies over Sri Lanka in the first of three Twenty20 cricket matches.

West Indies made a match of it with its late slow run rate chasing 147-9, despite scoring 66 runs in its first six overs.

Needing 20 runs from 20 balls, it was reduced to needing a run a ball from nine balls before Powell clinched the win with the home side's 149-3 total with four balls remaining.

Sri Lanka won the preceding — and soggy — three-match ODI series 1-0 after the final two matches were rained out. Sri Lanka won the first match by 41 runs. The final two matches in the T20 series are scheduled for Saturday and Sunday, also at Sabina Park in Kingston. —*PTI*

KANE WILLIAMSON ANNOUNCES RETIREMENT FROM INTERNATIONAL CRICKET

CHRISTCHURCH/ LONDON, 12 JUNE

New Zealand's batting maestro Kane Williamson on Friday announced his retirement from international cricket after a glorious career spanning more than 15 years.

This move marks the end of an era in New Zealand cricket across all three formats of the game, following his earlier decision to step way from T20 Internationals in 2025.

"I've thought about it for a while, but over the last few days it's become clear now is the right time. I've always felt a strong drive and hunger for international cricket, and I take pride in knowing I've given it my all in every match I've played for New Zealand," Williamson said in a statement issued by New Zealand Cricket.

"Continuing with anything less wouldn't be right and I feel fortunate to step away on my own terms," he added.

The 35-year finishes as New Zealand's all-time leading international run-scorer across all formats with 19,346 runs, including over 9,500 runs in Test cricket with 33 centuries and six double tons.

"One of our greatest ever, signing off. Kane Williamson has announced his retirement from international cricket effective immediately," the NZC said. Williamson is currently in England for an ongoing Test series and the Kiwis lost the opening match by 115 runs. —*PTI*

U-17 RANKING MEET

WFI disqualifies 500 wrestlers for age fraud

NEW DELHI, 12 JUNE

In a sweeping crackdown on age fraud, more than 500 wrestlers were disqualified from the U-17 National Open Ranking Tournament in Gonda after the Wrestling Federation of India (WFI) introduced a stringent Aadhaar-based verification system that exposed widespread discrepancies in age and birth records.

The tournament, held from 6 to 8 June in Uttar Pradesh's Gonda district, saw around 1,200 wrestlers register across men's freestyle, Greco Roman and women's categories.

Apart from the mandatory birth certificates used for age verification, wrestlers were asked to produce Aadhaar cards linked to their mobile numbers and provide OTP authentication through the Aadhaar app, which maintains a record of changes made to the document.

The exercise led to the disqualification of nearly 500 wrestlers -- around 300 in men's freestyle, 125 in Greco Roman and about 50 in women's wrestling -- after discrepancies emerged between details mentioned in birth certificates and Aadhaar records.

WFI President Sanjay Singh is seen at the recently held U-17 National Open Ranking tournament, in Gonda —*PTI*

In several cases, the place of birth and date of birth recorded in Aadhaar did not match those mentioned in birth certificates, many of which had been issued years after the wrestler's birth.

Following the verification process, only 350 wrestlers in men's freestyle, 185 women wrestlers and 160 Greco Roman wrestlers were cleared to compete in the tournament.

WFI president Sanjay Singh said the federation was committed to ensuring a level playing field and would continue with the enhanced verification mechanism in age-group competitions. —*PTI*